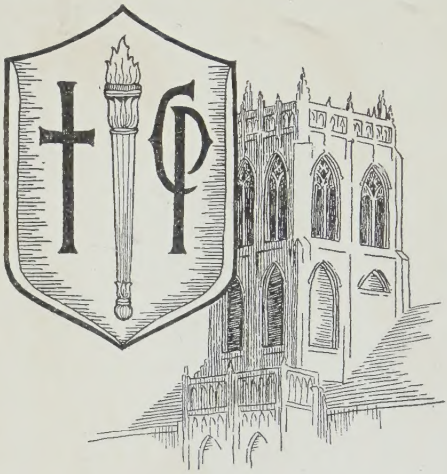
THE INFERNO

From THE DIVINE COMEDY of Dante Alighieri

Translated by S. FOWLER WRIGHT



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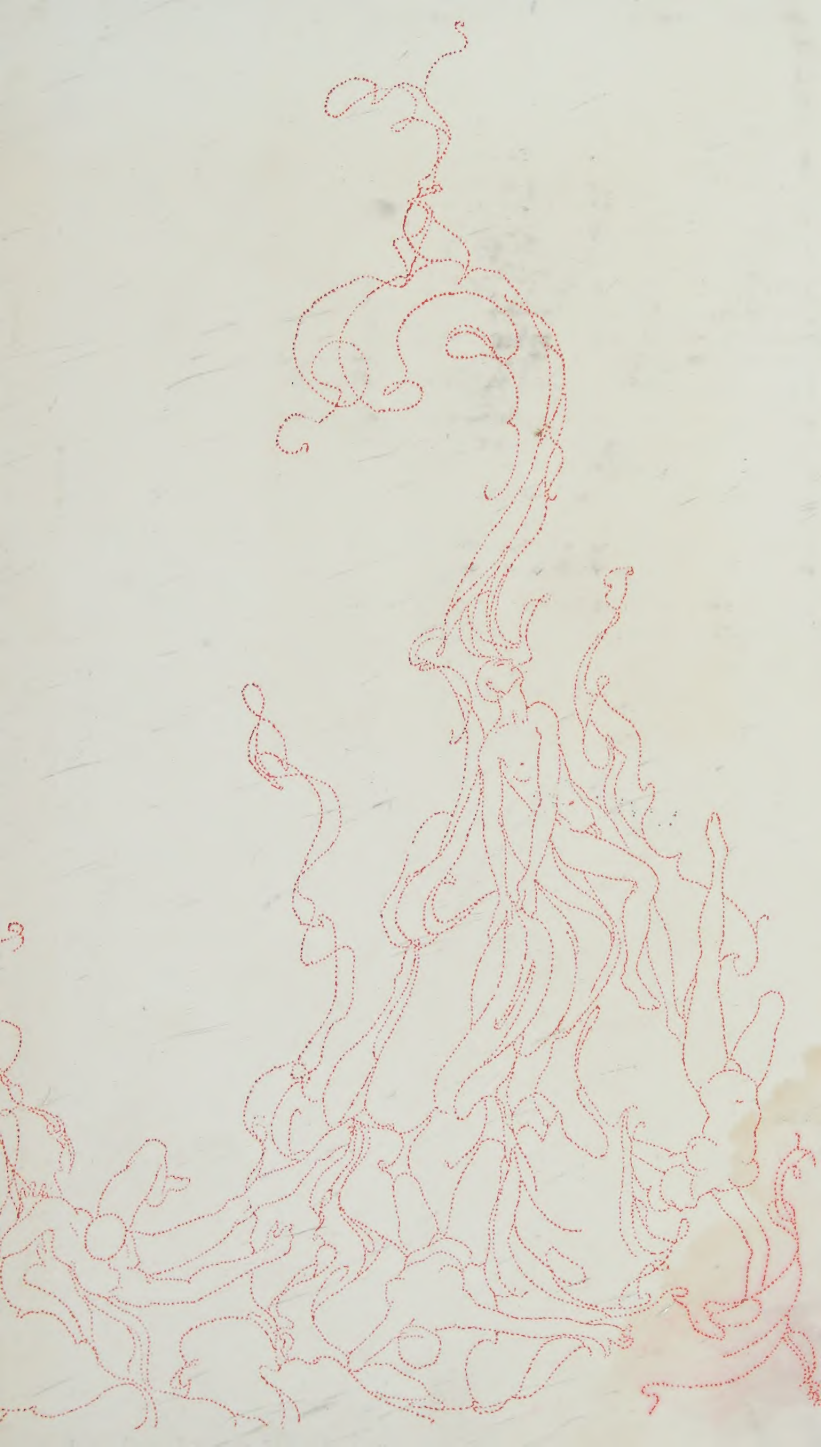

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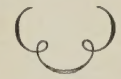

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PREFACE

I suppose that a very great majority of English-speaking people, if they were asked to name the greatest epic poet of the Christian era in Western Europe, would answer Dante, and that this answer would be given as decisively by those who would speak with an expert knowledge of European literature as by the larger number who would be repeating a received opinion.

Yet those who can read him in the medieval Italian must be a very small and still decreasing minority, and when all that is possible has been said in support of any existing translation, it remains a fact that there is no English rendering of the Divine Comedy, even including the tepid competence of Cary, which has won a genuine popularity.

For this, there are three reasons.

First, there is the general and almost insuperable difficulty of translating poetry of any kind from or into any language whatever.

Next, there is a special obstacle arising from the form in which the Divine Comedy was composed, which cannot be successfully imitated in English.

Third, there is the fact that a student of Dante is confronted by such a massed accretion of commentary that his approach to the poem is almost

forced toward the pedantic rather than the poetic. He is inclined to regard the obscure or halting line, the obvious padding, the enforced rhyme, which must occur at times in the greatest epic, as too sacred to be altered, and too important to be ignored. Here I am tempted to say that my first qualification for this undertaking is that, while I have some knowledge of European poetry, and some practice in its composition, I make no claim whatever to Italian scholarship!

The first of these—the inherent difficulty of all translation of poetry—may be briefly stated in this way. A great poem must have beauty both of form and of content. Soul and body must both be admirable. Having his subject under control, the poet represents it in such a way as is most suitable to the rhythms and verbal beauties of which his language is capable. If a bilingual poet were to attempt composition of the same epic in two languages, without the feeling of obligation to himself which a translator must feel, I have no doubt that he would deviate very widely in details of expression, and often in the actual thoughts expressed, as he would be led by different felicities of expression or the suggestion or absence of a rhyming word.

A translator, feeling an inferior liberty, faces alternate pitfalls. He may hammer out a verbal repetition of the original, phrase by phrase, which cannot result otherwise than in a doggerel imitation of poetry. He will labor diligently, and, in the end, he will not merely have failed to translate a

poem: he will have produced a malignant libel. Alternately, he may be tempted to follow the lure of his own constructions, or to omit or insert as the exigencies of the verse may lead him.

How can the narrow path be held successfully between these pitfalls—or, if one must be taken, on which side should the descent be made?

In confronting these perils, there is a first and vital question to be decided. In what metrical form shall the translation be made? Naturally, the first thought, and the first preference, is for that of the original poem. The rhythm and structure of a poem are not accidental. They are parts of its individuality. But the two languages concerned may differ too widely in their accentuations, in their dominant rhythms, in their grammatical and syllabic constructions, for such a repetition to be possible.

In face of this (which is a usual) difficulty, the translator may wisely consider what form the poet would most probably have chosen had he composed the poem in the language into which it is intended to render it.

Asking myself this question, I conclude that Dante would certainly not have selected for an English poem the *terza rima* in which the Divine Comedy is written, and that he would, with equal certainty, have selected the decasyllabic line, which is the finest and most flexible of which our language is capable.

Coming to the question of rhyme, a greater doubt arises. The decasyllabic line can be used with equal success for blank and for rhymed verse. Dante used

rhyme, which is a reason for adopting it, if possible. But the use of rhyme certainly increases the difficulty of a translation which is to be (if possible) both accurate and well constructed. My decision (which must be justified, if at all, by result) was to introduce rhyme with an irregular freedom, but to endeavor to reach a quality of verse which would be so far independent of this subordinate feature that its irregularity, or even occasional absence, would be unobtrusive to the reader's mind.

Having selected a form in which I hoped to be able to move with sufficient freedom, and which, in English, is best adapted to the spirit of the poem, I had to face the larger questions of formal and spiritual fidelity. In regard to these I recognize two primary obligations: first, I regard it as inexcusable to introduce any word or phrase which discolors the meaning of the original, or deviates from it; second, I am bound to present the substance of the poem with such verbal beauty as I am capable of constructing, even though an adjective be omitted or added in the process, or some non-essential order of narration be changed to obtain it. This last freedom of rendering is not merely a translator's right, it is a clear duty, because the directness and vigor of the original cannot be reproduced by any verbal literality, and it is of the first importance that he should inspire the poem with a new vitality.

My own approach to the poem having been poetic rather than pedantic, I have concerned myself very little with the subtleties of disputed words *unless*

some fundamental question of spiritual interpretation be dependent thereto. Desiring to introduce it to English readers from the same standpoint, I have reduced the inevitable notes to the barest minimum, and have placed them at the end of the volume.

Some knowledge of the conditions of Europe, social, political, and intellectual, as Dante knew them, some knowledge of the corruptions of Church and State, and of the civil discords which distracted his native Florence, and which prevailed in most of the cities of Northern Italy, may be essential to an understanding of the poem; a more detailed knowledge will add greatly to the enjoyment of many passages in it; but, finally, the Divine Comedy must stand or fall by its internal vitality, and it may gain more than it loses by being presented independently of the almost unbelievable accretions of disputation and commentary which have been piled upon it.

The cosmographical idea on which the poem is founded is extremely simple. The earth is a fixed point in the center of the Universe. The northern hemisphere is inhabited by the race of Adam. Purgatory is an isolated mountain in the seas of the southern hemisphere, which was unexplored at the time at which the poem was written. The seven Heavens extend, one beyond another, above the earth on every side, the seventh being infinite in extent. Hell is a central core of evil in the earth's interior.

Metaphorically, Dante represents himself as being entangled in the corruption of Florentine politics,

and restrained from their temptations by his love of literature (Virgil) and by his memory of Beatrice, by which influences he is led through and out of this central Hell to the ultimate Heaven.

It would be absurd to suppose that Dante believed in this Hell of his imagination as a physical fact. It would have been contrary to the logic of his intellect to suppose that he could discover its locality, or that of a material Purgatory, by his own intuition; nor, had he intended his readers to regard it otherwise than allegorically, would he have peopled it with fabled monsters such as Minos, Cerberus, and the Minotaur; or with demons of Persian, and centaurs of Greek, mythology.

He drew widely and impartially, from every source of human imagination. He faced the mystery of evil without flinching. He saw that good and evil are inevitable and everlasting, as long as life be free-willed and finite: and, recognizing this, he asserted confidently the divine supremacy of love, and its continual conquest, so that the whole conception becomes one magnificent metaphor of the preponderance of good and its eternal triumph, the residuum of evil being continually chased down and pressed into its central core, while the surrounding Heavens extend upwards, each of a larger orbit, and of a greater holiness than the one below, till the ultimate bliss of the seventh Heaven extends into infinity, so that even the vast extent of the six Heavens below is a triviality in this comparison.

Even in the narrow confines of the ever-conquered

evil, we are to understand that Love is absolute in its supremacy. It enters Hell, and Hell ceases to exist around it.

So we find that Hell has no power over those of pre-Christian times whose own lives were blameless. These are in a place of green lawns and quiet waters:

> for there,
> Intolerant of itself was Hell made fair
> To accord with its containing.

And even the verdict of Hell has no finality, for Virgil tells how he had witnessed the time when—

> "Through the shrunk hells there came a Great One, crowned
> And garmented with conquest,"

and how Christ had rescued a host of lost souls—

> "unnumbered, whom he had led
> Triumphant from the dark abodes, to be
> Among the blest forever."

And we are shown that Hell has no power to disturb the serenity of Beatrice. For such as she, she explains to Virgil—

> "There is no fear nor any hurt in Hell."

Yet there is one respect in which Dante's attitude is too Christ-like to be in sympathy with the vague compromises of modern Christianity. He teaches

that sin is sin, and that its consequences are logical, and inevitable. Those who have distorted the Founder of Christianity till "mild" appears to be an appropriate descriptive adjective, will have little sympathy with the attitude of Dante, whose tears for Francesca do not condone her guilt. She is in one of the outer circles of Hell, and she has the companionship of the one she loved, but she is in Hell, no less, without even the hope of Purgatory. Her husband, who killed her, is thrown into the lowest depth of damnation. There are no tears for him. Yet his condemnation is not her acquittal. She made a contract of marriage, and she broke it in an act of adultery with her husband's brother. Contracts should be kept. There is no more to be said, though there may be tears of pity.

So, when he sees the degradation of some of the finest intellects of the human race, he tells us how he was moved by their grief until—

> I, whose eyes with equal tears were wet,
> Bowed down upon the cold stone parapet
> And wept beyond controlling.

But his pity is powerless to move them from the Hell which their deeds have earned.

There is the same impartiality, the same remorseless justice, in the way in which friends or foes, whether with pity or contempt, are consigned to their appropriate places.

He has no preference for those of his own city:

none for his own Florentine faction. His dearest friend—his bitterest enemy—his closest relative—are equally likely to be found either in the lowest Hell or in the highest Heaven.

Concerning one only, his wife, Gemma Donati, whose alliance drew him into the slough of Florentine politics, is he always and entirely silent.

More than once his laments over the spiritual ruin of the city he loved reach an emotional intensity which is unrivaled on such a theme in any literature, with the exception of Christ's lament over Jerusalem, yet his love for Florence does not silence the bitter comment:

> Five thieves, and every thief a Florentine!

For the Divine Comedy is the great epic of Christianity. Milton attempted the same path, and brought an almost equal poetic genius, and an almost equal ability to enforce the contributions of alien mythologies to support his purpose. But he lacked the passionate hatred of evil, the passionate sympathy with human weakness, the almost God-like impartiality, the serene and confident faith of the earlier poet. It is of the deepest significance that where Dante prosecutes, Milton's brief is endorsed for the defense. He is concerned "to justify the ways of God to man." Dante's God is unapproachable in the ultimate Heaven, and humanity is on trial, but the God of Milton is in the dock; and though he defends his client with stubborn loyalty,

and great forensic skill, and claims that he has secured an acquittal, he leaves us with a sense of bewilderment, and a feeling that the result is due rather to clever advocacy than to the solid merits of the case itself. It would have been possible to put the same facts so very differently!

Dante's attitude to the organization and doctrines of the Christian church of his own day is of extreme interest, and presents questions of some complexity. He saw clearly that the greed of the Church for temporal power was a cause of spiritual weakness, and he was uncompromising in condemnation. He did not hesitate to assert that it was beyond the power of the papacy to excommunicate any man from the Divine forgiveness, giving on this point a direct challenge to the Church's teaching [1] at that time, as he did when he consigned the Franciscan to Hell for a sin for which he had received absolution in advance (Inferno, Canto XXVII). The very passion of his love for the Church is the measure of his bitterness against a pope who could use his office to betray it. Yet how did he distinguish these freedoms of opinion from the heresies which he condemned? I think a careful consideration of the character and teachings of those whom he variously placed in Hell or Purgatory will solve this apparent inconsistency, and show that there was no confusion in his own mind. He saw the sin of heresy as something which aims to divide rather than to unite, to destroy rather than to build. If he saw the body

[1] Purgatorio, Canto V.

of the church of Christ to be diseased, he would not call it healthy, but he strove for its cure, not for its destruction. He directed the whole passion of his soul, the whole force of his intellect, to arousing the Church to consciousness of the corruptions which it contained and tolerated; and, had he succeeded, had he been able to inspire it with his own spirit, it is not too much to say that there would have been no Reformation, or, at the least, that the Reformation would have taken a very different form.

The present volume contains the first of the three parts of which the Divine Comedy consists. Should its reception justify further publication, I hope to follow it with the Purgatorio and the Paradiso at short intervals, as they are already at an advanced stage of preparation.

It has been said that the latter parts of the poem are of less general interest than the first, the Purgatorio being encumbered with a dead philosophy, and the Paradiso rendered monotonous by the fact that Dante had nothing but light and color with which to build the Heavens of his imagination.

I venture to challenge these opinions. To me, the power and the imagination of the poem rise as it proceeds. I hope to justify this assertion, when I follow this volume with the later sections; and, should I fail, I should still hold that the fault is mine, and not that of the greater poet.

Certainly, he would not himself have given the place of honor to the Inferno, and if we consider it separately, we should not forget that the path

through Hell is only a means of approach to a clearer atmosphere where his art—

> Reviving from that depth where beauty dies[1]

can occupy itself with better things, till it culminates in the vision of the ultimate triumph of the Divine Love:[2]

> For all the earth
> That yearned for Heaven, and all the Heaven that bent
> Toward it, separate by the gulf of sin,
> Love bridges at last, and ye behold herein
> The bridal joys of their so long desire.
> Ye see the path God's suffering paved with fire;
> And Christ comes down it.

[1] Purgatorio, Canto I.
[2] Paradiso, Canto XXIII.

The Inferno

CANTO I

ONE night, when half my life behind me lay,
I wandered from the straight lost path afar.
Through the great dark was no releasing way;
Above that dark was no relieving star.
If yet that terrored night I think or say,
As death's cold hands its fears resuming are.

Gladly the dreads I felt, too dire to tell,
The hopeless, pathless, lightless hours forgot,
I turn my tale to that which next befell,
When the dawn opened, and the night was not.
The hollowed blackness of that waste, God wot,
Shrank, thinned, and ceased. A blinding splendor hot
Flushed the great height toward which my footsteps fell,

And though it kindled from the nether hell,
Or from the Star that all men leads, alike
It showed me where the great dawn-glories strike
The wide east, and the utmost peaks of snow.

How first I entered on that path astray,
Beset with sleep, I know not. This I know.
When gained my feet the upward, lighted way,
I backward gazed, as one the drowning sea,
The deep strong tides, has baffled, and panting lies,
On the shelved shore, and turns his eyes to see
The league-wide wastes that held him. So mine eyes
Surveyed that fear, the while my wearied frame
Rested, and ever my heart's tossed lake became
More quiet.
Then from that pass released, which yet
With living feet had no man left, I set
My forward steps aslant the steep, that so,
My right foot still the lower, I climbed.
Below
No more I gazed. Around, a slope of sand
Was sterile of all growth on either hand,
Or moving life, a spotted pard except,
That yawning rose, and stretched, and purred and leapt
So closely round my feet, that scarce I kept
The course I would.

That sleek and lovely thing,
The broadening light, the breath of morn and spring,
The sun, that with his stars in Aries lay,
As when Divine Love on Creation's day
First gave these fair things motion, all at one
Made lightsome hope; but lightsome hope was none
When down the slope there came with lifted head
And back-blown mane and caverned mouth and red,
A lion, roaring, all the air ashake
That heard his hunger. Upward flight to take
No heart was mine, for where the further way
Mine anxious eyes explored, a she-wolf lay,
That licked lean flanks, and waited. Such was she
In aspect ruthless that I quaked to see,
And where she lay among her bones had brought
So many to grief before, that all my thought
Aghast turned backward to the sunless night
I left. But while I plunged in headlong flight
To that most feared before, a shade, or man
(Either he seemed), obstructing where I ran,
Called to me with a voice that few should know,
Faint from forgetful silence, "Where ye go,
Take heed. Why turn ye from the upward way?"

I cried, "Or come ye from warm earth, or they
The grave hath taken, in my mortal need
Have mercy thou!"

He answered, "Shade am I,
That once was man; beneath the Lombard sky,
In the late years of Julius born, and bred
In Mantua, till my youthful steps were led
To Rome, where yet the false gods lied to man;
And when the great Augustan age began,
I wrote the tale of Ilium burnt, and how
Anchises' son forth-pushed a venturous prow,
Seeking unknown seas. But in what mood art thou
To thus return to all the ills ye fled,
The while the mountain of thy hope ahead
Lifts into light, the source and cause of all
Delectable things that may to man befall?"

I answered, "Art thou then that Virgil, he
From whom all grace of measured speech in me
Derived? O glorious and far-guiding star!
Now may the love-led studious hours and long
In which I learnt how rich thy wonders are,
Master and Author mine of Light and Song,
Befriend me now, who knew thy voice, that few
Yet hearken. All the name my work hath won
Is thine of right, from whom I learned. To thee,
Abashed, I grant it. . . . Why the mounting sun
No more I seek, ye scarce should ask, who see
The beast that turned me, nor faint hope have I
To force that passage if thine aid deny."

He answered, "Would ye leave this wild and live,
Strange road is ours, for where the she-wolf lies
Shall no man pass, except the path he tries
Her craft entangle. No way fugitive
Avoids the seeking of her greeds, that give
Insatiate hunger, and such vice perverse
As makes her leaner while she feeds, and worse
Her craving. And the beasts with which she breeds,
The noisome numerous beasts her lusts require,
Bare all the desirable lands in which she feeds;
Nor shall lewd feasts and lewder matings tire
Until she woos, in evil hour for her,
The wolfhound that shall rend her. His desire
Is not for rapine, as the promptings stir
Of her base heart; but wisdoms, and devoirs
Of manhood, and love's rule, his thoughts prefer.
The Italian lowlands he shall reach and save,
For which Camilla of old, the virgin brave,
Turnus and Nisus died in strife. His chase
He shall not cease, nor any cowering-place
Her fear shall find her, till he drive her back,
From city to city exiled, from wrack to wrack,
Slain out of life, to find the native hell
Whence envy loosed her.

For thyself were well
To follow where I lead, and thou shalt see
The spirits in pain, and hear the hopeless woe,
The unending cries, of those whose only plea

Is judgment, that the second death to be
Fall quickly. Further shalt thou climb, and go
To those who burn, but in their pain content
With hope of pardon; still beyond, more high,
Holier than opens to such souls as I,
The Heavens uprear; but if thou wilt, is one
Worthier, and she shall guide thee there, where none
Who did the Lord of those fair realms deny
May enter. There in His city He dwells, and there
Rules and pervades in every part, and calls
His chosen ever within the sacred walls.
O happiest, they!"
I answered, "By that God
Thou didst not know, I do thine aid entreat,
And guidance, that beyond the ills I meet
I safety find, within the Sacred Gate
That Peter guards, and those sad souls to see
Who look with longing for their end to be."

Then he moved forward, and behind I trod.

CANTO II

THE day was falling, and the darkening air
Released earth's creatures from their toils, while I,
I only, faced the bitter road and bare
My Master led. I only, must defy
The powers of pity, and the night to be.
So thought I, but the things I came to see,
Which memory holds, could never thought forecast.
O Muses high! O Genius, first and last!
Memories intense! Your utmost powers combine
To meet this need. For never theme as mine
Strained vainly, where your loftiest nobleness
Must fail to be sufficient.
First I said,
Fearing, to him who through the darkness led,
"O poet, ere the arduous path ye press
Too far, look in me, if the worth there be
To make this transit. Æneas once, I know,
Went down in life, and crossed the infernal sea;
And if the Lord of All Things Lost Below
Allowed it, reason seems, to those who see

The enduring greatness of his destiny,
Who in the Empyrean Heaven elect was called
Sire of the Eternal City, that throned and walled
Made Empire of the world beyond, to be
The Holy Place at last, by God's decree,
Where the great Peter's follower rules. For he
Learned there the causes of his victory.

"And later to the third great Heaven was caught
The last Apostle, and thence returning brought
The proofs of our salvation. But, for me,
I am not Æneas, nay, nor Paul, to see
Unspeakable things that depths or heights can show,
And if this road for no sure end I go
What folly is mine? But any words are weak.
Thy wisdom further than the things I speak
Can search the event that would be."
Here I stayed
My steps amid the darkness, and the Shade
That led me heard and turned, magnanimous,
And saw me drained of purpose halting thus,
And answered, "If thy coward-born thoughts be clear,
And all thy once intent, infirmed of fear,
Broken, then art thou as scared beasts that shy
From shadows, surely that they know not why
Nor wherefore . . . Hearken, to confound thy fear,

The things which first I heard, and brought me here. . . .
One came where, in the Outer Place, I dwell,
Suspense from hope of Heaven or fear of Hell,
Radiant in light that native round her clung,
And cast her eyes our hopeless Shades among
(Eyes with no earthly like but heaven's own blue),
And called me to her in such voice as few
In that grim place had heard, so low, so clear,
So toned and cadenced from the Utmost Sphere,
The Unattainable Heaven from which she came.
'O Mantuan Spirit,' she said, 'whose lasting fame
Continues on the earth ye left, and still
With Time shall stand, an earthly friend to me,
—My friend, not fortune's—climbs a path so ill
That all the night-bred fears he hastes to flee
Were kindly to the thing he nears. The tale
Moved through the peace of Heaven, and swift I sped
Downward, to aid my friend in love's avail,
With scanty time therefor, that half I dread
Too late I came. But thou shalt haste, and go
With golden wisdom of thy speech, that so
For me be consolation. Thou shalt say,
"I come from Beatricë." Downward far,
From Heaven to Heaven I sank, from star to star,
To find thee, and to point his rescuing way.
Fain would I to my place of light return;

Love moved me from it, and gave me power to
learn
Thy speech. When next before my Lord I stand
I very oft shall praise thee.'
Here she ceased,
And I gave answer to that dear command,
'Lady, alone through whom the whole race of those
The smallest Heaven the moon's short orbits hold
Excels in its creation, not thy least,
Thy lightest wish in this dark realm were told
Vainly. But show me why the Heavens unclose
To loose thee from them, and thyself content
Couldst thus continue in such strange descent
From that most Spacious Place for which ye burn,
And while ye further left, would fain return.'

" 'That which thou wouldst,' she said, 'I briefly tell.
There is no fear nor any hurt in Hell,
Except that it be powerful. God in me
Is gracious, that the piteous sights I see
I share not, nor myself can shrink to feel
The flame of all this burning. One there is
In height among the Holiest placed, and she
—Mercy her name—among God's mysteries
Dwells in the midst, and hath the power to see
His judgments, and to break them. This sharp woe
I tell thee, when she saw, she called, that so
Leaned Lucia toward her while she spake—and said,

"One that is faithful to thy name is sped,
Except that now ye aid him." She thereat,
—Lucia, to all men's wrongs inimical—
Left her High Place, and crossed to where I sat
In speech with Rachel (of the first of all
God saved). "O Beatrice, Praise of God,"
—So said she to me— "sitt'st thou here so slow
To aid him, once on earth that loved thee so
That all he left to serve thee? Hear'st thou not
The anguish of his plaint? and dost not see,
By that dark stream that never seeks a sea,
The death that threats him?"
None, as thus she said,
None ever was swift on earth his good to chase,
None ever on earth was swift to leave his dread,
As came I downward from that sacred place
To find thee and invoke thee, confident
Not vainly for his need the gold were spent
Of thy word-wisdom.' Here she turned away,
Her bright eyes clouded with their tears, and I,
Who saw them, therefore made more haste to reach
The place she told, and found thee. Canst thou say
I failed thy rescue? Is the beast anigh
From which ye quailed? When such dear saints beseech
—Three from the Highest—that Heaven thy course allow

Why halt ye fearful? In such guards as thou
The faintest-hearted might be bold."
As flowers,
Close-folded through the cold and lightless hours,
Their bended stems erect, and opening fair
Accept the white light and the warmer air
Of morning, so my fainting heart anew
Lifted, that heard his comfort. Swift I spake,
"O courteous thou, and she compassionate!
Thy haste that saved me, and her warning true,
Beyond my worth exalt me. Thine I make
My will. In concord of one mind from now,
O Master and my Guide, where leadest thou
I follow."
And we, with no more words' delay,
Went forward on that hard and dreadful way.

CANTO III

THE gateway to the city of Doom. Through me
The entrance to the Everlasting Pain.
The Gateway of the Lost. The Eternal Three
Justice impelled to build me. Here ye see
Wisdom Supreme at work, and Primal Power,
And Love Supernal in their dawnless day.
Ere from their thought creation rose in flower
Eternal first were all things fixed as they.
Of Increate Power infinite formed am I
That deathless as themselves I do not die.
Justice divine has weighed: the doom is clear.
All hope renounce, ye lost, who enter here.
This scroll in gloom above the gate I read,
And found it fearful. "Master, hard," I said,
"This saying to me." And he, as one that long
Was customed, answered, "No distrust must wrong
Its Maker, nor thy cowarder mood resume
If here ye enter. This the place of doom
I told thee, where the lost in darkness dwell.
Here, by themselves divorced from light, they fell,
And are as ye shall see them." Here he lent

A hand to draw me through the gate, and bent
A glance upon my fear so confident
That I, too nearly to my former dread
Returned, through all my heart was comforted,
And downward to the secret things we went.

Downward to night, but not of moon and cloud,
Not night with all its stars, as night we know,
But burdened with an ocean-weight of woe
The darkness closed us.
Sighs, and wailings loud,
Outcries perpetual of recruited pain,
Sounds of strange tongues, and angers that remain
Vengeless for ever, the thick and clamorous crowd
Of discords pressed, that needs I wept to hear,
First hearing. There, with reach of hands anear,
And voices passion-hoarse, or shrilled with fright,
The tumult of the everlasting night,
As sand that dances in continual wind,
Turns on itself for ever.
And I, my head
Begirt with movements, and my ears bedinned
With outcries round me, to my leader said,
"Master, what hear I? Who so overborne
With woes are these?"
He answered, "These be they
That praiseless lived and blameless. Now the scorn
Of Height and Depth alike, abortions drear;

Cast with those abject angels whose delay
To join rebellion, or their Lord defend,
Waiting their proved advantage, flung them here.—
Chased forth from Heaven, lest else its beauties end
The pure perfection of their stainless claim,
Out-herded from the shining gate they came,
Where the deep hells refused them, lest the lost
Boast something baser than themselves."
And I,
"Master, what grievance hath their failure cost,
That through the lamentable dark they cry?"

He answered, "Briefly at a thing not worth
We glance, and pass forgetful. Hope in death
They have not. Memory of them on the earth
Where once they lived remains not. Nor the breath
Of Justice shall condemn, nor Mercy plead,
But all alike disdain them. That they know
Themselves so mean beneath aught else constrains
The envious outcries that too long ye heed.
Move past, but speak not."
Then I looked, and lo,
Were souls in ceaseless and unnumbered trains
That past me whirled unending, vainly led
Nowhither, in useless and unpausing haste.
A fluttering ensign all their guide, they chased
Themselves for ever. I had not thought the dead,
The whole world's dead, so many as these. I saw

The shadow of him elect to Peter's seat
Who made the great refusal, and the law,
The unswerving law that left them this retreat
To seal the abortion of their lives, became
Illumined to me, and themselves I knew,
To God and all his foes the futile crew
How hateful in their everlasting shame.

I saw these victims of continued death
—For lived they never—were naked all, and loud
Around them closed a never-ceasing cloud
Of hornets and great wasps, that buzzed and clung,
—Weak pain for weaklings meet,—and where they stung,
Blood from their faces streamed, with sobbing breath,
And all the ground beneath with tears and blood
Was drenched, and crawling in that loathsome mud
There were great worms that drank it.
Gladly thence
I gazed far forward. Dark and wide the flood
That flowed before us. On the nearer shore
Were people waiting. "Master, show me whence
These came, and who they be, and passing hence
Where go they? Wherefore wait they there content,
—The faint light shows it,—for their transit o'er
The unbridged abyss?"
He answered, "When we stand

Together, waiting on the joyless strand,
In all it shall be told thee." If he meant
Reproof I know not, but with shame I bent
My downward eyes, and no more spake until
The bank we reached, and on the stream beheld
A bark ply toward us.
Of exceeding eld,
And hoary showed the steersman, screaming shrill,
With horrid glee the while he neared us, "Woe
To ye, depraved!—Is here no Heaven, but ill
The place where I shall herd ye. Ice and fire
And darkness are the wages of their hire
Who serve unceasing here— But thou that there
Dost wait though live, depart ye. Yea, forbear!
A different passage and a lighter fare
Is destined thine."
But here my guide replied,
"Nay, Charon, cease; or to thy grief ye chide.
It There is willed, where that is willed shall be,
That ye shall pass him to the further side,
Nor question more."
The fleecy cheeks thereat,
Blown with fierce speech before, were drawn and flat,
And his flame-circled eyes subdued, to hear
That mandate given. But those of whom he spake
In bitter glee, with naked limbs ashake,
And chattering teeth received it. Seemed that then

They first were conscious where they came, and fear
Abject and frightful shook them; curses burst
In clamorous discords forth; the race of men,
Their parents, and their God, the place, the time,
Of their conceptions and their births, accursed
Alike they called, blaspheming Heaven. But yet
Slow steps toward the waiting bark they set,
With terrible wailing while they moved. And so
They came reluctant to the shore of woe
That waits for all who fear not God, and not
Them only.
Then the demon Charon rose
To herd them in, with eyes that furnace-hot
Glowed at the task, and lifted oar to smite
Who lingered.
As the leaves, when autumn shows,
One after one descending, leave the bough,
Or doves come downward to the call, so now
The evil seed of Adam to endless night,
As Charon signalled, from the shore's bleak height,
Cast themselves downward to the bark. The brown
And bitter flood received them, and while they passed
Were others gathering, patient as the last,
Not conscious of their nearing doom.
"My son,"
—Replied my guide the unspoken thought—"is none
Beneath God's wrath who dies in field or town,

Or earth's wide space, or whom the waters drown,
But here he cometh at last, and that so spurred
By Justice, that his fear, as those ye heard,
Impels him forward like desire. Is not
One spirit of all to reach the fatal spot
That God's love holdeth, and hence, if Charon chide,
Ye well may take it.—Raise thy heart, for now,
Constrained of Heaven, he must thy course allow."

Yet how I passed I know not. For the ground
Trembled that heard him, and a fearful sound
Of issuing wind arose, and blood-red light
Broke from beneath our feet, and sense and sight
Left me. The memory with cold sweat once more
Reminds me of the sudden-crimsoned night,
As sank I senseless by the dreadful shore.

CANTO IV

A RISING thunder from the vast Abyss
First roused me, not as he that rested wakes
From slumbrous hours, but one rude fury shakes
Untimely, and around I gazed to know
The place of my confining.

Deep, profound,
Dark beyond sight, and choked with doleful sound,
Sheer sank the Valley of the Lost Abyss,
Beneath us. On the utmost brink we stood,
And like the winds of some unresting wood
The gathered murmur from those depths of woe
Soughed upward into thunder. Out from this
The unceasing sound comes ever. I might not tell
How deep the Abyss down sank from hell to hell,
It was so clouded and so dark no sight
Could pierce it.

"Downward through the worlds of night
We will descend together. I first, and thou
My footsteps taking," spake my guide, and I
Gave answer, "Master, when thyself art pale,
Fear-daunted, shall my weaker heart avail

That on thy strength was rested?"
"Nay," said he,
"Not fear, but anguish at the issuing cry
So pales me. Come ye, for the path we tread
Is long, and time requires it." Here he led
Through the first entrance of the ringed abyss,
Inward, and I went after, and the woe
Softened behind us, and around I heard
Nor scream of torment, nor blaspheming word,
But round us sighs so many and deep there came
That all the air was motioned. I beheld
Concourse of men and women and children there
Countless. No pain was theirs of cold or flame,
But sadness only. And my Master said,
"Art silent here? Before ye further go
Among them wondering, it is meet ye know
They are not sinful, nor the depths below
Shall claim them. But their lives of righteousness
Sufficed not to redeem. The gate decreed,
Being born too soon, we did not pass (for I,
Dying unbaptized, am of them). More nor less
Our doom is weighed,—to feel of Heaven the need,
To long, and to be hopeless."
Grief was mine
That heard him, thinking what great names must be
In this suspense around me. "Master, tell,"
I questioned, "from this outer girth of Hell
Pass any to the blessed spheres exalt,

Through other's merits or their own the fault.
Condoned?" And he, my covert speech that read,
—For surance sought I of my faith,—replied,
"Through the shrunk hells there came a Great One, crowned
And garmented with conquest. Of the dead,
He rescued from us him who earliest died,
Abel, and our first parent. Here He found,
Abraham, obedient to the Voice he heard;
And Moses, first who wrote the Sacred Word;
Isaac, and Israel and his sons, and she,
Rachel, for whom he travailed; and David, king;
And many beside unnumbered, whom he led
Triumphant from the dark abodes, to be
Among the blest for ever. Until this thing
I witnessed, none, of all the countless dead,
But hopeless through the somber gate he came."

Now while he spake he paused not, but pursued,
Through the dense woods of thronging spirits, his aim
Straight onward, nor was long our path until
Before us rose a widening light, to fill
One half of all the darkness, and I knew
While yet some distance, that such Shades were there
As nobler moved than others, and questioned, "Who,
Master, are those that in their aspect bear

Such difference from the rest?"
"All these," he said,
"Were named so glorious in thy earth above
That Heaven allows their larger claim to be
Select, as thus ye see them."
While he spake
A voice rose near us: "Hail!" it cried, "for he
Returns, who was departed."
Scarce it ceased
When four great spirits approached. They did not
show
Sadness nor joy, but tranquil-eyed as though
Content in their dominion moved. My guide
Before I questioned told, "That first ye see,
With hand that fits the swordhilt, mark, for he
Is Homer, sovereign of the craft we tried,
Leader and lord of even the following three,—
Horace, and Ovid, and Lucan. The voice ye heard,
That hailed me, caused them by one impulse stirred
Approach to do me honour, for these agree
In that one name we boast, and so do well
Owning it in me." There was I joyed to meet
Those shades, who closest to his place belong,
The eagle course of whose out-soaring song
Is lonely in height.
Some space apart (to tell,
It may be, something of myself), my guide
Conversed, until they turned with grace to greet

Me also, and my Master smiled to see
They made me sixth and equal. Side by side
We paced toward the widening light, and spake
Such things as well were spoken there, and here
Were something less than silence.
Strong and wide
Before us rose a castled height, beset
With sevenfold-circling walls, unscalable,
And girdled with a rivulet round, but yet
We passed thereover, and the water clear
As dry land bore me; and the walls ahead
Their seven strong gates made open one by one,
As each we neared, that where my Master led
With ease I followed, although without were none
But deep that stream beyond their wading spread,
And closed those gates beyond their breach had been,
Had they sought entry with us.
Of coolest green
Stretched the wide lawns we midmost found, for there,
Intolerant of itself, was Hell made fair
To accord with its containing.
Grave, austere,
Quiet-voiced and slow, of seldom words were they
That walked that verdure.
To a place aside
Open, and light, and high, we passed, and here

Looked downward on the lawns, in clear survey
Of such great spirits as are my glory and pride
That once I saw them.
There, direct in view,
Electra passed, among her sons. I knew
Hector and Æneas there; and Cæsar too
Was of them, armed and falcon-eyed; and there
Camilla and Penthesilea. Near there sate
Lavinia, with her sire the Latian king;
Brutus, who drave the Tarquin; and Lucrece
Julia, Cornelia, Marcia, and their kin;
And, by himself apart, the Saladin.

Somewhat beyond I looked. A place more high
Than where these heroes moved I gazed, and knew
The Master of reasoned thought, whose hand withdrew
The curtain of the intellect, and bared
The secret things of nature; while anigh,
But lowlier, grouped the greatest names that shared
His searchings. All regard and all revere
They gave him. Plato there, and Socrates
I marked, who closeliest reached his height; and near
Democritus, who dreamed a world of chance
Born blindly in the whirl of circumstance;
And Anaxagoras, Diogenes,
Thales, Heraclitus, Empedocles,

Zeno, were there; and Dioscorides
Who searched the healing powers of herbs and trees;
And Orpheus, Tullius, Livius, Seneca,
Euclid and Ptolemæus; Avicenna,
Galen, Hippocrates; Averrhoës,
The Master's great interpreter,—but these
Are few to those I saw, an endless dream
Of shades before whom Hell quietened and cowered.
My theme,
With thronging recollections of mighty names
That there I marked impedes me. All too long
They chase me, envious that my burdened song
Forgets.—But onward moves my guide anew:
The light behind us fades: the six are two:
Again the shuddering air, the cries of Hell
Compassed, and where we walked the darkness fell.

CANTO V

MOST like the spirals of a pointed shell,
But separate each, go downward, hell from hell,
The ninefold circles of the damned; but each
Smaller, concentrate in its greater pain,
Than that which overhangs it.
Those who reach
The second whorl, on entering, learn their bane
Where Minos, hideous, sits and snarls. He hears,
Decides, and as he girds himself they go.

Before his seat each ill-born spirit appears
And tells its tale of evil, loath or no,
While he, their judge, of all sins cognizant,
Hears, and around himself his circling tail
Twists to the number of the depths below
To which they doom themselves in telling.
Alway
The crowding sinners: their turn they wait: they show

Their guilt: the circles of his tail convey
Their doom: and downward they are whirled away.

"O thou who callest at this doleful inn,"
Cried Minos to me, while the child of sin
That stood confessing before him, trembling stayed,
"Heed where thou enterest in thy trust, nor say,
I walk in safety, for the width of way
Suffices."
But my guide the answer took,
"Why dost thou cry? or leave thine ordered trade
For that which nought belongs thee? Hinder not
His destined path. For where he goeth is willed,
Where that is willed prevaileth."
Now was filled
The darker air with wailing. Wailing shook
My soul to hear it. Where we entered now
No light attempted. Only sound arose,
As ocean with the tortured air contends,
What time intolerable tempest rends
The darkness; so the shrieking winds oppose
For ever, and bear they, as they swerve and sweep,
The doomed disastrous spirits, and whirl aloft,
Backward, and down, nor any rest allow,
Nor pause of such contending wraths as oft
Batter them against the precipitous sides, and there
The shrieks and moanings quench the screaming air,
The cries of their blaspheming.

These are they
That lust made sinful. As the starlings rise
At autumn, darkening all the colder skies,
In crowded troops their wings up-bear, so here
These evil-doers on each contending blast
Were lifted upward, whirled, and downward cast,
And swept around unceasing. Striving airs
Lift them, and hurl, nor ever hope is theirs
Of rest or respite or decreasing pains,
But like the long streaks of the calling cranes
So came they wailing down the winds, to meet
Upsweeping blasts that ever backward beat
Or sideward flung them on their walls. And I—
"Master who are they next that drive anigh
So scourged amidst the blackness?"
"These," he said,
"So lashed and harried, by that queen are led,
Empress of alien tongues, Semiramis,
Who made her laws her lawless lusts to kiss,
So was she broken by desire; and this
Who comes behind, back-blown and beaten thus,
Love's fool, who broke her faith to Sichæus,
Dido; and bare of all her luxury,
Nile's queen, who lost her realm for Antony."

And after these, amidst that windy train,
Helen, who soaked in blood the Trojan plain,
And great Achilles I saw, at last whose feet

The same net trammelled; and Tristram, Paris, he showed;
And thousand other along the fated road
Whom love led deathward through disastrous things
He pointed as they passed, until my mind
Was wildered in this heavy pass to find
Ladies so many, and cavaliers and kings
Fallen, and pitying past restraint, I said,
"Poet, those next that on the wind appear
So light, and constant as they drive or veer
Are parted never, I fain would speak."
And he,—
"Conjure them by their love, and thou shalt see
Their flight come hither."
And when the swerving blast
Most nearly bent, I called them as they passed,
"O wearied souls, come downward, if the Power
That drives allow ye, for one restful hour."
As doves, desirous of their nest at night,
Cleave through the dusk with swift and open flight
Of level-lifting wings, that love makes light,
Will-borne, so downward through the murky air
Came those sad spirits, that not deep Hell's despair
Could sunder, parting from the faithless band
That Dido led, and with one voice, as though
One soul controlled them, spake,
"O Animate!

Who comest through the black malignant air,
Benign among us who this exile bear
For earth ensanguined, if the King of All
Heard those who from the outer darkness call
Entreat him would we for thy peace, that thou
Hast pitied us condemned, misfortunate.—
Of that which please thee, if the winds allow,
Gladly I tell. Ravenna, on that shore
Where Po finds rest for all his streams, we knew;
And there love conquered. Love, in gentle heart
So quick to take dominion, overthrew
Him with my own fair body, and overbore
Me with delight to please him. Love, which gives
No pardon to the loved, so strongly in me
Was empired, that its rule, as here ye see,
Endureth, nor the bitter blast contrives
To part us. Love to one death led us. The mode
Afflicts me, shrinking, still. The place of Cain
Awaits our slayer."
They ceased, and I my head
Bowed down, and made no answer, till my guide
Questioned, "What wouldst thou more?" and I replied,
"Alas my thought! what sweet keen longings led
These spirits, woeful, to their dark abode!"
And then to them,—"Francesca, all thy pain
Is mine. With pity and grief I weep. But say

How, in the time of sighing, and in what way,
Love gave you of the dubious deeds to know."

And she to me, "There is no greater woe
In all Hell's depths than cometh when those who fell
Look back to Eden. But if thou wouldst learn
Our love's first root, I can but weep and tell.
One day, and for delight in idleness,
—Alone we were, without suspicion,—
We read together, and chanced the page to turn
Where Galahad tells the tale of Lancelot,
How love constrained him. Oft our meeting eyes,
Confessed the theme, and conscious cheeks were hot,
Reading, but only when that instant came
Where the surrendering lips were kissed, no less
Desire beat in us, and whom, for all this pain,
No hell shall sever (so great at least our gain),
Trembling, he kissed my mouth, and all forgot,
We read no more."
As thus did one confess
Their happier days, the other wept, and I
Grew faint with pity, and sank as those who die.

CANTO VI

THE misery of that sight of souls in Hell
Condemned, and constant in their loss, prevailed
So greatly in me, that I may not tell
How passed I from them, sense and memory failed
So far.
But here new torments I discern,
And new tormented, wheresoe'er I turn.
For sodden around me was the place of bane,
The third doomed circle, where the culprits know
The cold, unceasing, and relentless rain
Pour down without mutation. Heavy with hail,
With turbid waters mixed, and cold with snow,
It streams from out the darkness, and below
The soil is putrid, where the impious lie
Grovelling, and howl like dogs, beneath the flail
That flattens to the foul soaked ground, and try
Vainly for ease by turning. And the while
Above them roams and ravens the loathsome hound
Cerberus, and feeds upon them.
The swampy ground

He ranges; with his long clawed hands he grips
The sinners, and the fierce and hairy lips
(Thrice-headed is he) tear, and the red blood drips
From all his jaws. He clutches, and flays, and rends,
And treads them, growling: and the flood descends
Straight downward.
When he saw us, the loathly worm
Showed all his fangs, and eager trembling frame
Nerved for the leap. But undeterred my guide.
Stooped down, and gathered in full hands the soil,
And cast it in the gaping gullets, to foil
Gluttonous blind greed, and those fierce mouths and wide
Closed on the filth, and as the craving cur
Quietens, that strained and howled to reach his food,
Biting the bone, those squalid mouths subdued
And silenced, wont above the empty dead
To bark insatiate, while they tore unfed
The writhing shadows.
The straight persistent rain,
That altered never, had pressed the miry plain
With flattened shades that in their emptiness
Still showed as bodies. We might not here progress
Except we trod them. Of them all, but one
Made motion as we passed. Against the rain
Rising, and resting on one hand, he said,
"O thou, who through the drenching murk art led,

Recall me if thou canst. Thou wast begun
Before I ended."

I, who looked in vain
For human semblance in that bestial shade,
Made answer, "Misery here hath all unmade,
It may be, that thou wast on earth, for nought
Recalls thee to me. But thyself shalt tell
The sins that scourged thee to this foul resort,
That more displeasing not the scope of Hell
Can likely yield, though greater pains may lie
More deep."

And he to me, "Thy city, so high
With envious hates that swells, that now the sack
Bursts, and pours out in ruin, and spreads its wrack
Far outward, was mine alike, while clearer air
Still breathed I. Citizens who knew me there
Called me Ciacco. For the vice I fed
At rich men's tables, in this filth I lie
Drenched, beaten, hungered, cold, uncomforted,
Mauled by that ravening greed; and these, as I,
With gluttonous lives the like reward have won."

I answered, "Piteous is thy state to one
Who knew thee in thine old repute, but say,
If yet persists thy previous mind, which way
The feuds of our rent city shall end, and why
These factions vex us, and if still there be
One just man left among us."

"Two," said he,
"Are just, but none regards them. Yet more high
The strife, till bloodshed from their long contend
Shall issue at last: the barbarous Cerchi clan
Cast the Donati exiled out, and they
Within three years return, and more offend
Than they were erst offended, helped by him
So long who palters with both parts. The fire
Three sparks have lighted—Avarice, Envy, Pride,—
And there is none may quench it."
Here he ceased
His lamentable tale, and I replied,
"Of one thing more I ask thee. Great desire
Is mine to learn it. Where are those who sought
Our welfare earlier? Those whose names at least
Are fragrant for the public good they wrought,
Arrigo, Mosca, and the Tegghiaio
Worthiest, and Farinata, and with these
Jacopo Rusticucci. I would know
If soft in Heaven or bitter-hard in Hell
Their lives continue."
"Cast in hells more low
Than yet thou hast invaded, deep they lie,
For different crimes from ours, and shouldst thou go
So far, thou well mayst see them. If thou tread
Again the sweet light land, and overhead
Converse with those I knew there, then recall,

I pray, my memory to my friends of yore.
But ask no further, for I speak no more."

Thereon his eyes, that straight had gazed before
Squinted and failed, and slowly sank his head,
And blindly with his sodden mates he lay.
And spake my guide, "He shall not lift nor stir,
Until the trumpet shrills that wakens Hell;
And these, who must inimical Power obey,
Shall each return to his sad grave, and there
In carnal form the sinful spirit shall dwell
Once more, and that time only, from the tomb
Rising to hear the irrevocable doom
Which shall reverberate through eternity."

So paced we slowly through the rain that fell
Unchanging, over that foul ground, and trod
The dismal spirits it held, and somewhat spake
Of life beyond us, and the things of God;
And asked I, "Master, shall these torments cease,
Continue as they are, or more increase,
When calls the trumpet, and the graves shall break,
And the great Sentence sound?"
And he to me,
"Recall thy learning, as thou canst. We know
With more perfection, greater pain or bliss
Resolves, and though perfection may not be
To these accurs'd, yet nearer then than this

It may be they shall reach it."
More to show
He sought, as turned we to the fresh descent,
But speaking all in such strange words as went
Past me.—But ceased our downward path, and lo!
Plutus, of human weal the hateful foe.

CANTO VII

HAH, strange! ho, Satan!" such the sounds half-heard
The thick voice gobbled, the while the foul, inflamed,
Distended visage toward us turned, and cast
Invective from its bestial throat, that slurred
Articulate speech. But here the gentle sage,
Who knew beforehand that we faced, to me
Spake first, "Regard not; for a threat misaimed
Falls idle. Fear not to continue past.
His power to us, however else it be,
Is not to hinder." Then, that bulk inflate
Confronting,—"Peace, thou greed! thy lusting rage
Consume thee inward! Not thy word we wait
The path to open. It is willed on high,—
There, where the Angel of the Sword ye know
Took ruin upon the proud adultery
Of him thou callest as thy prince."
Thereat
As sails, wind-rounded, when the mast gives way,
Sink tangled to the deck, deflated so

Collapsed that bulk that heard him, shrunk and flat;
And we went downward till before us lay
The fourth sad circle. Ah! what woes contain,
Justice of God! what woes those narrowing deeps
Contain; for all the universe down-heaps
In this pressed space its continent of pain,
So voiding all that mars its peace. But why
This guilt that so degrades us?
As the surge
Above Charybdis meets contending surge,
Breaks and is broken, and rages and recoils
For ever, so here the sinners. More numerous
Than in the circles past are these. They urge
Huge weights before them. On, with straining breasts,
They roll them, howling in their ceaseless toils.
And those that to the further side belong
Do likewise, meeting in the midst, and thus
Crash vainly, and recoil, reverse, and cry,
"Why dost thou hold?" "Why dost thou loose?"
No rest
Their doom permits them. Backward course they bend;
Continual crescents trace, at either end
Meeting again in fresh rebound, and high
Above their travail reproachful howlings rise
Incessant at those who thwart their round.
And I,

Who felt my heart stung through with anguish, said,
"O Master, show me who these peoples be,
And if those tonsured shades that left we see
Held priestly office ere they joined the dead."

He answered, "These, who with such squinting eyes
Regarded God's providing, that they spent
In waste immoderate, indicate their guilt
In those loud barkings that ye hear. They spilt
Their wealth distemperate; and those they meet
Who cry 'Why loose ye?' avarice ruled: they bent
Their minds on earth to seize and hoard. Of these
Hairless, are priests, and popes, and cardinals,
For greed makes empire in such hearts complete."

And I, "Among them that these vices eat
Are none that I have known on earth before?"

He answered, "Vainly wouldst thou seek; a life
So blind to bounties has obscured too far
The souls once theirs, for that which once they wore
Of mortal likeness in their shades to show.
Waste was their choice, and this abortive strife
And toil unmeaning is the end they are.
They butt for ever, until the last award
Shall call them from their graves. Ill-holding those,
Ill-loosing these, alike have doomed to know
This darkness, and the fairer world forgo.

Behold what mockery doth their fate afford!
It needs no fineness of spun words to tell.
For *this* they did their subtle wits oppose,
Contending for the gifts that Fortune straws
So blindly,—for this blind contending hell.

"Beneath the moon there is not gold so great
In worth, it could one moment's grief abate,
Or rest one only of these weary souls."

"Master, this Fortune that ye speak, whose claws
Grasp all desirable things of earth," I said,
"What is she?"
"O betrayed in foolishness!
Blindness of creatures born of earth, whose goals
Are folly and loss!" he answered, "I would make
Thy mouth an opening for this truth I show.

"Transcendent Wisdom, when the spheres He built
Gave each a guide to rule it: more nor less
Their light distributes. For the earth he gave
Like guide to rule its splendours. As we know
The heavenly lights move round us, and is spilt
Light here, and darkness yonder, so doth she
From man to man, from race and kindred take
Alternate wealth, or yield it. None may save
The spoil that she depriveth: none may flee
The bounty that she wills. No human wits

May hinder, nor may human lore reject
Her choice, that like a hidden snake is set
To reach the feet unheeding. Where she sits
In judgment, she resolves, and whom she wills
Is havened, chased by petulant storms, or wrecked
Remedeless. Races cease, and men forget
They were. Slaves rise to rule their lords. She fills
And empties, godlike in her mood. No pause
Her changes leave, so many are those who call
About her gates, so many she dowers, and all
Revile her after, and would crucify
If words could reach her, but she heeds nor hears,
Who dwells beyond the noise of human laws
In the blest silence of the Primal Spheres.

—But let us to the greater woes descend.
The stars from their meridian fall, that rose
When first these hells we entered. Long to stay
Our right of path allows not."
While he spake
We crossed the circle to the bank beyond,
And found a hot spring boiling, and a way,
Dark, narrow, and steep, that down beside it goes,
By which we clambered. Purple-black the pond
Beneath it, widening to a marsh that spreads
Far out, and struggling in that slime malign
Were muddied shades, that not with hands, but
heads,

And teeth and feet besides, contending tore,
And maimed each other in beast-like rage.
My guide
Expounded, "Those whom anger overbore
On earth, behold ye. Mark the further sign
Of bubbles countless on the slime that show.
These from the sobs of those immersed arise;
For buried in the choking filth they cry,
We once were sullen in the rain-sweet air,
When waked the light, and all the earth was fair,
Now sullen in the murky swamp we lie
Forbidden from the blessed light on high.
This song they gurgle in their throats, that so
The bubbles rising from the depths below
Break all the surface of the slime."
Between
The high bank and the putrid swamp was seen
A narrow path, and this, a sweeping arc,
We traversed; outward o'er the surface dark
Still gazing, at the choking shades who took
That diet for their wrath. Till livelier look
Was forward drawn, for where at last we came
A great tower fronted, and a beacon's flame.

CANTO VIII

I SAY, while yet from that tower's base afar,
We saw two flames of sudden signal rise,
And further, like a small and distant star,
A beacon answered.
"What before us lies?
Who signals our approach, and who replies?"
I asked, and answered he who all things knew,
"Already, if the swamp's dank fumes permit,
The outcome of their beacon shows in view,
Severing the liquid filth."
No shaft can slit
Impalpable air, from any corded bow,
As came that craft towards us, cleaving so,
And with incredible speed, the miry wave.
To where we paused its meteor course it clave,
A steersman rising in the stern, who cried,
"Behold thy doom, lost spirit!" To whom my guide,
"Nay, Phlegyas, Phlegyas, here thy cries are vain.
We need thine aid the further shore to gain;
But power thou hast not."

One amazed to meet
With most unlooked and undeserved deceit
So rages inly; yet no dared reply
There came, as down my Leader stept, and I
Deepened the skiff with earthly weight undue,
Which while we seated swung its bows anew
Outward, and onward once again it flew,
Labouring more deep than wont, and slowlier now,
So burdened.
While that kennel of filth we clave,
There rose among the bubbles a mud-soaked head.
"Who art thou, here before thy time?" it said,
And answer to the unfeatured mask I gave,
"I come, but stay not. Who art thou, so blind
And blackened from the likeness of thy kind?"

"I have no name, but only tears," said he.

I answered, "Nay, however caked thou be,
I know thee through the muddied drench. For thee
Be weeping ever, accursed spirit."
At that,
He reached his hands to grasp the boat, whereat
My watchful Master thrust him down, and cried,
"Away, among the dogs, thy fellows!" and then
To me with approbation, "Blest art thou,
Who wouldst not pity in thy heart allow
For these, in arrogance of empty pride

Who lived so vainly. In the minds of men
Is no good thing of this one left to tell,
And hence his rage. How many above that dwell,
Now kinglike in their ways, at last shall lie
Wallowing in these wide marshes, swine in sty,
With all men's scorn to chase them down."
And I,
"Master, it were a seemly thing to see
This boaster trampled in the putrid sea,
Who dared approach us, knowing of all we know."

He answered, "Well thy wish, and surely so
It shall be, e'er the distant shore we view."
And I looked outward through the gloom, and lo!
The envious eaters of that dirt combined
Against him, leapt upon him, before, behind,
Dragged in their fury, and rent, and tore him through,
Screaming derisive, "Philip! whose horse-hooves shine
With silver," and the rageful Florentine
Turned on himself his gnashing teeth and tore.

But he deserveth, and I speak, no more.

Now, as we neared the further beach, I heard
The lamentable and unceasing wail
By which the air of all the hells is stirred

Increasing ever, which caused mine eyes unveil
Their keenest vision to search what came, and he
Who marked, indulgent, told. "Ahead we see
The city of Dis, with all its dolorous crew,
Numerous, and burdened with reliefless pain,
And guilt intolerable to think."
I said,
"Master, already through the night I view
The mosques of that sad city, that fiery red
As heated metal extend, and crowd the plain."
He answered, "These the eternal fire contain,
That pulsing through them sets their domes aglow."
At this we came those joyless walls below,
—Of iron I thought them,—with a circling moat;
But saw no entrance, and the burdened boat
Traced the deep fosse for half its girth, before
The steersman warned us. "Get ye forth. The shore
Is here,—and there the Entrance."
There, indeed,
The entrance. On the barred and burning gate
I gazed; a thousand of the fiends that rained
From Heaven, to fill that place disconsolate,
Looked downward, and derided. "Who," they said,
"Before his time comes hither? As though the dead
Arrive too slowly for the joys they would,"
And laughter rocked along their walls. My guide
Their mockery with an equal mien withstood,

Signalling their leaders he would speak aside,
And somewhat closing their contempt they cried,
"Then come thou hither, and let him backward go,
Who came so rashly. Let him find his way
Through the five hells ye traversed, the best he may.
He can but try it awhile!—But thou shalt stay,
And learn the welcome of these halls of woe."

Ye well may think how I, discomforted
By these accursed words, was moved. The dead,
Nay, nor the living were ever placed as I,
If this fiends' counsel triumphed. And who should try
That backward path unaided?
"Lord," I said,
"Loved Master, who hast shared my steps so far,
And rescued ever, if these our path would bar,
Then lead me backward in most haste, nor let
Their malice part us."
He with cheerful mien,
Gave answer. "Heed not that they boast. Forget
The fear thou showest, and in good heart abide,
While I go forward. Not these fiends obscene
Shall thwart the mandate that the Power supplied
By which we came, nor any force to do
The things they threaten is theirs; nor think that I
Should leave thee helpless here."
The gentle Sage

At this went forward. Feared I? Half I knew
Despair, and half contentment. Yes and no
Denied each other; and of so great a woe
Small doubt is anguish.
In their orgulous rage
The fiends out-crowded from the gates to meet
My Master; what he spake I could not hear;
But nothing his words availed to cool their heat,
For inward thronged they with a jostling rear
That clanged the gates before he reached, and he
Turned backward slowly, muttering, "Who to me
Denies the woeful houses?" This he said
Sighing, with downcast aspect and disturbed
Beyond concealment; yet some length he curbed
His anxious thought to cheer me. "Doubt ye nought
Of power to hurt in these fiends insolent;
For once the wider gate on which ye read
The words of doom, with greater pride, they sought
To close against the Highest. Already is bent
A great One hereward, whose unhindered way
Descends the steeps unaided. He shall say
Such words as must the trembling hells obey."

CANTO IX

I THINK the paleness of the fear I showed
When he, rejected from that conference,
Rejoined me, caused him speak more confident
Than felt he inly. For the glance he sent
Through the dense darkness of the backward road
Denied the valour of his words' pretence;
And pausing there with anxious listening mien,
While came no sound, nor any help was seen,
He muttered, "Yet we must this conflict win,
For else— But whom her aid has pledged herein—
How long before he cometh!" And plain I knew
His words turned sideward from the ending due
They first portended. Faster beat my fear,
Methinks, than had he framed in words more clear
The meaning that his care withheld.
I said,
"Do others of the hopeless, sinless, dead,
Who with thee in the outmost circle dwell,
Come ever downward to the narrowing hell
That now we traverse?"
"Once Erichtho fell,"

He answered, "conjured to such end that I,
—Who then short time had passed to those who die,—
Came here, controlled by her discerning spell,
And entered through these hostile gates, and drew
A spirit from the darkest, deepest pit,
The place of Judas named, that centres Hell.
The path I learnt, and all its dangers well.
Content thine heart. This foul-stretched marsh surrounds
The dolorous city to its furthest bounds.
Without, the dense mirk, and the bubbling mire:
Within, the white-hot pulse of eating fire,
Whence this fiend-anger thwarts . . . ," and more he said,
To save me doubtless from my thoughts, but I
Heeded no more, for by the beacons red
That on the lofty tower before us glowed,
Three bloodstained and infernal furies showed,
Erect, of female form in guise and limb,
But clothed in coils of hydras green and grim;
And with cerastes bound was every head,
And for its crown of hair was serpented;
And he, who followed my diverted gaze,
The handmaids of the Queen of Woeful Days
Well knowing, told me, "These the Furies three.
Megæra leftward: on the right is she
Alecto, wailing: and Tisiphone

Midmost."

These hateful, in their need of prey,
Tore their own breasts with bloodied claws, and when
They saw me, from the living world of men,
Beneath them standing, with one purpose they
Cried, and so loudly that I shrank for fear,
"Medusa! let her from her place appear,
To change him into stone! Our first default
That venged no wrath on Theseus' deep assault,
So brings him."

"Turn thou from their sight," my guide
Enjoined, nor wholly on my fear relied,
But placed his hands across mine eyes the while
He told me further. "Risk no glance. The sight
Of Gorgon, if she cometh, would bring thee night
From which were no returning."

Ye that read
With wisdom to discern, ye well may heed
The hidden meaning of the truth that lies
Beneath the shadow-words of mysteries
That here I show ye.

While I turned away,
Across the blackness of the putrid bay,
There crashed a thunder of most fearful sound,
At which the opposing shores, from bound to bound,
Trembled.

As when an entering tempest rends

The brooding heat, and nought its course can stay,
That through the forest its dividing way
Tears open, and tramples down, and strips, and bends,
And levels. The wild things in the woods that be
Cower down. The herdsmen from its trumpets flee.
With clouds of dust to trace its course it goes,
Superb, and leaving ruin. Such sound arose.
And he that held me loosened mine eyes, and said,
"Look back, and see what foam the black waves bear."

As frogs, the while the serpent picks his prey,
In panic scatter through the stream, and there
Flatten themselves upon its bouldered bed,
I saw a thousand ruined spirits that fled
Before the coming of One who held his way
Dry-shod across the water.
His left hand
He waved before him, and the stagnant air
Retreated. Simple it were to understand
A Messenger of Heaven he came. My guide
Signed me to silence, and to reverence due,
While to one stroke of his indignant wand
The gates swung open. "Outcast spawn!" he cried,
His voice heard vibrant through the aperture grim,
"Why spurn ye at the Will that, once defied,
Here cast ye grovelling? Have ye felt from Him

Aught ever for fresh revolt but harder pains?
Has Cerberus' throat, skinned with the threefold
chains,
No meaning? Why, to fate most impotent,
Contend ye vainly?"
Then he turned and went,
Nor one glance gave us, but he seemed as one
Whom larger issue than the instant done
Engages wholly.
By that Power compelled,
The gates stood open, and our course we held
Unhindered. As the threshold dread we crossed,
My eager glances swept the scene to know,
In those doomed walls imprisoned, how lived the
lost.

On either hand a wide plain stretched, to show
A sight of torment, and most dismal woe.

At Arles, where the stagnant Rhone extends,
Or Pola, where the gulf Quarnero bends,
As with old tombs the plains are ridged, so here,
All sides, did rows of countless tombs appear,
But in more bitter a guise, for everywhere
Shone flames, that moved among them.
Every tomb
Stood open, white with heat. No craft requires
More heated metal than the crawling fires

Made hot the sides of those sad sepulchres;
And cries of torture and most dire despair
Came from them, as the spirits wailed their doom.

I said, "Who are they, in these chests that lie
Confined, and join in this lamenting cry?"

My Master answered, "These in life denied
The faith that saves, and that resisting pride
Here brought them. With their followers, like to like,
Assorted are they, and the keen flames strike
With differing anguish, to the same degree
They reached in their rebellion."
While he spake
Rightward he turned, a narrow path to take
Between them and that high-walled boundary.

CANTO X

FIRST went my Master, for the space was small
Between the torments and the lofty wall,
And I behind him.
"O controlling Will,"
I spake, "who leadest through such hates, and still
Prevailest for me, wilt thou speak, that who
Within these tombs are held mine eyes may see?
For lifted are they, and unwatched."
And he,—
"The lids stand open till the time arrive
When to the valley of Jehoshaphat
They each must wend, and earthly flesh resume,
And back returning, as the swarming hive,
From condemnation, each the doleful tomb
Re-enter wailing, and the lids thereat
Be bolted. Here in fitting torment lie
The Epicurean horde, who dared deny
That soul outlasts its mortal home. Is here
Their leader, and his followers round him. Soon
Shall all thy wish be granted,—and the boon
Ye hold in secret."

"Kind my guide," I said,
"I was not silent to conceal, but thou
Didst teach, when in thy written words I read,
That in brief speech is wisdom."
Here a voice
Behind me, "Tuscan, who canst walk at choice
Untouched amidst the torments, wilt thou stay?
For surely native of the noble land
Where once I held my too-audacious way,
Discreet of speech, thou comest."
The sudden cry
So close behind me from the chests that came,
First drove me closer to my guide, but he,—
"What dost thou? Turn thee!"—and a kindly hand
Impelled me, fearful, where the crawling flame
Was all around me,—"Lift thine eyes and see,
For there is Farinata. Be thou short
In speech, for time is failing."
Scorn of hell
Was in the eyes that met me. Hard he wrought
To raise himself, till girdle-deep I knew
The greatest of the fierce Uberti crew,
Who asked me, with contempt near-waiting, "Tell
Of whom thou art descended?"
I replied,
Concealing nothing. With lifted brows he eyed
My face in silence some brief while, and then,—

"Foes were they ever to my part, and me.
It yet must linger in the minds of men
How twice I broke them."
"Twice ye learned them flee,"
—I answered boldly,—"but they twice returned;
And others fled more late who have not learned
The mode of that returning."
Here a shade
Arose beside him, only to the chin
Revealed: I think it knelt. Beyond and round
It rather looked than at me. Nought it found.
Thereat it wept, and asked me, "Ye that go
Unhindered through these homes of gateless woe,—
Is my son with thee? Hast thou nought to tell?"

I answered, "Single through the gates of hell
I had no power to enter. Near my guide
Awaits me yonder.—Whom in foolish pride,
Thy Guido held so lightly."
At the word
He leapt erect from out the tomb, and cried,
"How saidst thou? *Held?* Already he hath not
died?
Doth not the sweet light meet him? The clear air
Breathes he not yet?"
The imploring cries I heard
But checked awhile to answer, and in despair
He fell flat forward, and was seen no more.

But he, magnanimous, who first delayed
My steps, had heeded nought, nor turned his head,
And now continued that he spake before.
"If with the coin ye forged they have not paid,
It more torments me than this flaming bed.
Yet thou thyself, before the Queen of Night
Shall fifty times revoke and raise her light,
Shalt learn the hardship of that art. But tell,
As thou wouldst feel the cool winds' pinions beat
Once more upon thee, and the sweet light fall
Around the feet of morning, for this heat
And fetid air we writhe in, why were all
Those exiles pardoned by thy laws, to dwell
In their dear homes once more, and only mine,
My kindred, find no mercy?"
I to him,—
"The rout and chase that dyed the Arbia red
To thy descendants dealt this bitter bread;
The memory of that slaughter doth not dim,
But leaves thee to our prayers a name of hate
In all our churches."
Here he sighed, and said,
"I was not single in that strife, nor lacked
Good cause to strike; but when your remnant fled,
And Florence, naked to her foes elate,
Cowered, waiting, all with one consent agreed
To tread her out to dust, and extirpate
All life within her, I, and only I,

Stood out against it, and refused the deed,
And with my swords I saved them. Is this thing
Less memoried than my wrath?"
I answered, "Yea:
But what I can I will, and that thy seed
Have rest at my returning, solve, I pray,
A doubt that disconcerts me. Ye that dwell
In these abodes beneath us, each foretell
—Or so ye claim—what distant times shall bring,
Yet plead for knowledge of the passing day,—
Or mock me, asking that yourselves could say."

He answered, "As in age a man may see
Far off, while nearer sights are blurred, so we
See clearly times long passed, and times to be.
Foresight is ours, and long remembering,
In each an anguish, while the anxious mind
Is void to all around it, foiled and blind
Where most it longs for knowledge. Nought we know
Thine earthly present, save as here below
One after one descending bears his tale;
And therefore, when the wings of Time shall fail,
And sealed in these accursed tombs we lie,
All knowledge from our vacant minds shall die,
As well ye may perceive it."
Here I said,

Compunctious for a fault now seen, "Wilt tell
That other, fallen, that I did not well
Withholding answer? Guido is not dead.
My silence from the earlier doubt was bred,
From which thou hast resolved me."
Now my guide
Was calling, and in greater haste I said,
"Thy comrades in thy grief I charge thee tell,
Ere I go from thee."
Shortly he replied,
"The second Frederick, and the Cardinal,
Are with me, and a thousand more beside
Of whom I speak not."
With the word he fell;
And I went onward, turning in my thought
The hostile presage of his words that taught
Mine own near exile, till my guide at last
Questioned, "What cloud thine eyes hath overcast?
What thought hath wildered all thy mind?" and I
Answered, and told.
He said, "The things thou hear'st
That threat thee, hold them in thy memory well.
Yet know that soon, beneath a fairer sky,
When she, whose sight hath no blank space, shall tell
What cometh, then shalt thou read, ungapped and
clear,
The journey of thy life."

The while he spake
He turned him leftward from the wall, to take
A path that to the midmost vale declined,
A fetid rising odour first to find.

CANTO XI

BUT boldly outward from the wall we went,
Down sloping, till a sudden steep descent
Before us yawned. The sides, extending far,
Of broken rocks, a great pit circular
Enclosed. Beneath our feet a fouler throng
Than that we left, upcast a stench so vile
We might not face, but left our course awhile
To crouch behind a stone-built monument,
Whereon I read, *"Pope Anastasius*
Is here, who sold his faith for Photinus."

Then spake my Master. "Till the fetid air
By gradual use we take, we must not dare
Continue downward."
"Show me, while we stay,
The meanings of this foul and dreadful way."

"I meant it, surely," said my guide. "Behold
The space beneath us. There three circlets lie,
Alike to those we left behind, but why
This deeper fate is theirs, I first will show;

And when we pass them in the depths below
Ye need not wait to question what ye see.

"All malice of men's hearts in injury
Results, and hence to Heaven is odious;
And all the malice that aggrieveth thus
Strikes in two ways, by either force or fraud;
And fraud in man is vice peculiar,
That from Hell's centre to the utmost star
Is else unknown, and is to God therefore
Most hateful. Hence the violent-sinful lie
Outward, and inmost are the fraudulent.
And as the sinful-violent make their war
On God, their neighbours, or themselves, so they
Are portioned in the outer wards.
I say,
To them, or to the things they own, the wrong
May aim. By violence, wounds or death may be,
Extortions, burnings, wastes; and ye shall see
That equal in the outmost round belong
Reivers of life alike, and plunderers.
And in the second round are those whose sin
Is violence to themselves; they weep therein,
Repenting when too late, whose hands destroy
Their earthly bodies; and condemned alike
Are those with profligate wasteful hands who strike
At their own wealth, or having cause for joy
Reject it, weeping with no need. The third

And smallest of the outer circlets holds
All those with violence of blaspheming words,
Or in their hearts, the Lord of Life deny,
The wealth of Nature that the world enfolds
Contemning. Hence by lust or usury,
Sodom or Cahors, the downward path may be
That ends in this destruction.
Fraud, that gnaws
The universal conscience of mankind,
Is also different in its guilt, because
It either at the stranger strikes behind,
Or makes the sacred bond of confidence
The means of its prevailing; and the first
Breaks but the kindly general bond, and hence
More outward in the final depths are cast
Deceivers, flatterers, cheats, and sorcerers,
Thieves, panders, and such filth.
The last and worst
And smallest circle holds such souls as break
Not only in their guilt the natural bond
That all men own, but in some trust, beyond
The usual course, are faithless. In this lake,
The base and centre of Dis, the inmost hell,
All traitors in relentless torments dwell."

I answered, "Master, clearer words than these
I could not ask, the ranks of guilt to show,
That gather in the dreadful gulfs below;

But tell me,—those that in so great dis-ease
We earlier passed, wind-beaten, choked with slime,
Or chilled and flattened with unending rain,
If God's wrath reach them, why they yet remain
Outside the hot walls of the Place of Pain?
Or why they suffer through the night of Time
So greatly, if they are not judged to Hell?"

He answered, "Surely ye recall not well
The Ethics that your schools have taught, or wide
Your thoughts have wandered from their wont, to
cause
A doubt so simple. Are there not three laws
By which the ways of Hell from Heaven divide—
Beast-treason, malice, and incontinence,
And of these three the third the least offence
To God provoketh, and receives less blame?
Bethink the faults of those where first ye came
Through circles loftier than the heated wall
That now surrounds us, and ye well shall see
Why with less wrath the strokes of justice fall
On those left outward by divine decree."

"O Light!" I said, "whose cheering rays dispel
The mists that blind me, wilt thou further tell
Why stands the customed toll of usury
Condemned in thy discourse as direst sin,
Abhorrent to the bounty of God?"

He said,
"The teaching of thine own Philosophy
Is pregnant with this truth unborn. Therein
Thou learn'st of God himself, interpreted
In Nature's ways; and as a child may tread
Unsurely in its Master's steps, thine art
Interprets Nature in its turn, and is
God's grandchild therefore. Through these mysteries
Look backward. When the Law of Eden came,
How spake the Eternal Wisdom? *Toil;* It said,
And in that labour find thy guerdon-bread:
Be fruitful, and increase thy kind. His part
God gave to man, so saying. The usurer
Seeks not his profit in the path designed,
But looks the fruit of others' toils to find,
And pluck where nought he planted.
More to say
The time permits not; but the downward way
We needs must venture. In the outer skies
The Fishes from the pale horizon rise,
And the Great Wain its shining course descends
Where the night-lair of Caurus dark extends."

CANTO XII

NOW came we to the steep cliff-side. As where
The Adige at the mountain bored until
Fell the huge ruin of half its bulk, and there
Turned the swift stream a further course to fill
Beneath the scarred precipitous side, so here
The shattered ominous cliffs descended sheer;
And sprawled across the verge, Crete's infamy,
The fruit of that false cow, Pasiphaë,
Was fearsome, that the boldest heart should flee.

To us he turned his red malignant eyes,
Gnawing his own side, the while he strove to rise,
As one made rageful past restraint, but loud
My leader hailed him, "Think'st thou, overproud,
That Theseus cometh, who gave thy death before?
Not one that Ariadne taught is here,
Nor destined victim for thy rage to gore,
But one who walketh through the place of fear
In safety, to behold the stripes ye bore."

As some roped bull, whose throat is stretched to feel
The knife's sharp doom, against the rending steel
So madly wrenches that he breaks away,
Already slaughtered, plunging while he may,
But blindly and vainly, at this word I saw
Heaving the huge bulk of the Minotaur,
And cried my careful guide, "Descend with speed,
The whilst he rages."
Down with watchful heed,
But swiftly, clomb we by the rocks' rough side,
The jutting stones that lightly held my guide
Trembling beneath my earthlier weight.
He said,
Who watched my silence, "Likely turns thy thought
To this rent ruin the gross beast guards. Before,
When downward came I, of this fall was nought,
But nearly after came that Lord who bore
Out from the horror of Dis its choicer prey.
Hell, to its loathliest entrails, felt that day
Love's coming, and trembled, and this mountain fell.
The power of Love, that thus discomfits Hell,
Oft in forgotten times, as sages tell,
Hath changed our world to chaos.—But heed thy way.
Before us is the gulf of blood wherein
Murderers by violence purge their briefer sin.
O blindness of their greed, or bestial rage!

So short the war that on their kind they wage;
So long is their repenting."
I beheld
A wide moat, curving either hand, as though
Its sweep surrounded all the plain. Below
On the near bank, were Centaurs, each who held
A spear for casting, or a bended bow,
The while they raced along the brink, as when
Their game they hunted in the world of men.

Seeing us, they stayed, and of the nearest, three
Approached us, with the threats of shaft on string.
One cried, "What torments do your guilts decree,
Who cross Hell's gaps in such strange wandering?
How came ye loosened from your dooming?—Say,
Lest the cord teach ye."
Unperturbed, my guide
Gave answer. "Not for such vain threats we stay.
To Chiron only will we speak. Thy will
For rashness cost thee once thy life, and still
Inciteth folly." And then to me, "Behold
Nessus, who once for Deianira died;
Beyond is Chiron, round whose mighty knees
Played once the infant years of Achilles;
The rageful Pholus is the last; they go
With thousand others around the moat, that so
If any spirits the boiling blood would quit
Beyond the licence of their dooms, they know

A different anguish from the shafts that slit
The parts shown naked."
These swift beasts and we
Approached each other the while he spake, and he,
Great Chiron, with a shaft's notched end put back
The beard that hindered both his jaws, and said,
To those his comrades, "Not as walk the dead
Doth this one coming, but with the weight they lack
Disturbs the stones he treadeth."
My guide by now
Stood where the human and the brute combined,
Beneath his breast, and answered for me. "Yea,
He lives indeed, and I, to lead his way,
Trace this dark valley. No sportive choice to find,
But driven of need, he threads this night of flame;
And She from singing Alleluias came
Who bade me do it. No spirit condemned am I,
Nor he deserving of thy doom. I pray,
By virtue of the Name I will not say,
That of thy comrades one thy care supply
To guide us to the ford, and him to bear
Across, who may not tread the yielding air
As those discarnate."
Chiron's bearded head
Bent round to Nessus at his right, and said,
"Turn, as they ask, and guide, and bear him through,
And warn thy comrades that no wrong they do

To these in passing."
In this trusty ward
We held the margin of the purple flood
That seethed beneath us. In the boiling blood
Were spirits to the brows immersed.
"Ye see,"
Said Nessus, "tyrants who by weight of sword
Spread death and rapine in their lands. Is here
Fierce Dionysius, who the doleful year
Made long to those he ruled in Sicily;
And Alexander here repents; and he
Whose brows o'erhung with night-black hair ye see
Is Azzolino; and the head beyond
Where on the stream the trailing mane is blonde,
Obizzo, whom his stepson choked."
We came
Where other spirits in the boiling pond
Showed from the neck, and in this place beheld
That Guy who to avenge his father's name
The English Henry at Viterbo felled,
Even in the presence of God. The victim's heart,
Yet raised in reverence on the bank of Thame,
Recalls it, and the assassin boils apart,
Placed separate for the deed's high blasphemy.

And further passed we those whose guilt allowed
Of freedom to the waist. Among the crowd,
More numerous now, were more in clearer view,

That by themselves or by their deeds I knew,
As shallower yet the seething purple grew,
Till all except the miscreants' feet was free.

"Here must we cross the fosse," the Centaur said,
And I, sole living in this world of dead,
Climbed upward, and my earthly weight he bore,
And while he waded to the further shore
Continued, "As the boiling stream ye see
Diminish, so its bottom sinks anew
Rounding the circle, till it comes once more
To those whose ruling choked their world in gore,
In which they suffer. High Justice here torments
The pirate Sextus, and fierce Pyrrhus here;
Attila with eternal tears laments;
And Rinier Pazzo, once a word of fear,
With Rinier of Corneto boils, to pay
For bandit-murders on the State's highway."

CANTO XIII

WHILE Nessus yet recrossed the purple stream
A wood we entered where no path appeared,
No cool wind stirred, nor any sun came through,
But all the foliage, as by winter seared,
Was brittle and brown, and gnarled and twisted grew
The branches, and if any fruit did seem
They were but poisonous pods to closer view.
No denser holts the lurking beasts have found
Beneath Corneto, where the marshy ground,
Uncoultered, to Cecina's stream declines.

Foul harpies nest amidst the loathly vines,
Who chased the Trojans from the Strophades,
With their drear wail of some awaiting woe.
Their wings are wide: and like gross birds below
Their bellies feathered, and their feet are clawed.
Strange cries come from them through the sickly trees.

My Master told me, "Through this dismal land,
The second circlet pass we, till we reach

The place of that intolerable sand
Which forms the third, and in its place completes
The outer round. Recall my earlier speech
That taught the order of these woes. Look well
For confirmation of the things I tell."

I looked, but saw not. Every side there rose
A wailing burdened with unnumbered woes,
While all the woods were vacant. From the ground
It came not—rather from the boughs around
It beat upon us, as voiced by those who hid
Before our coming, the tangled growth amid.

My Master taught me. "If thou break away
The nearest twig that meets thine hand, wilt see
How far thy dreaming from the truth astray."

Thereat I reached, and from a twisted thorn
That rose before us, withered, gaunt, forlorn,
Broke short a twig, and from the trunk a cry
Came sharply, "Tear not!" and a blood-gout grew
Dark on the wound, the while the trunk anew
Entreated, "Rend not; does no mercy lie
In those that still their human forms retain?
Men were we, till we left on earth self-slain
The bodies given of God. But had we been
The souls of serpents, in this hopeless dole

We had not thought that any mortal soul
Would wound us, helpless to their hands."
Hast seen
Cast on the coals a living branch and green?
One end already burns, and one projects
Clear of the heat, but from the fire's effects
Moisture exudes and hissing wind. So here
Blood welled and words from out the wound. The
fear
Of this strange voice, and pity, so in me wrought
I dropt the broken shoot, and fixed in thought
Stood silent.
On my side my leader spake,
"O wounded spirit, had his heart believed
The truth that earlier in my verse he read,
He had not with unthinking violence grieved
The most unhappy of the hapless dead.
But mine the word that caused his hand to break,
Who knew that truth's incredibility
Would else confound him. It was grief to me
To prompt him to it. But if thou speak and tell
Of whom thou wast, he may requite thee well,
Thy fame renewing in the world, for there
He soon returneth."
And the voice replied,
"The sound of thy seducing words and fair
Constrains me to forgive thee, and confide
The bitter grief that in my trunk I hide,

Which else were silent always. With me bear
In patience somewhat, if I talk too long,
Caught in this bait of words, when all my wrong
Returneth to me. In this toil is he,
The second Frederick's confident, who held
His heart's two keys, and turned them. Here ye see
The ruin of too great fidelity,
That sleep and life gave forfeit. Yea, for she,
That harlot who in Cæsar's court rebelled
Against all virtue round his throne, the bane
And vice of all high concourse, Envy, stirred
And slandered, till my Master half believed.
And I, who all things at his hands received,
And all myself had rendered, in disdain
Gave silence only to the accusing word,
And in contempt of life I broke the chain
That held me to it. Just to others, I wrought
Injustice to myself. But here I swear,
By these sad roots that hold me, word nor thought,
Nor deed nor negligence was mine in aught
Against him faithless. Ye that upward bear
The news and burden of our griefs below,
Rebuild my memory in the world, I pray,
That my rash hand prostrated."
Here his woe
Found silence, and the things I sought to say
I lacked the heart. Until, at last, my guide

Enquired me, "Wouldst thou more?" and I replied,
"Ask for me."
To the prisoned grief he said,
"That this man gladly when he leave the dead
Uplift thy record, as thy words entreat,
Inform us further how this fate ye meet,
How the bent soul these twisted knots allows;
Or ever any from these tortured boughs
Erect himself to manhood."
Then the tree
Blew strongly, and the wind was words that said,
"In brief thou shalt be answered. When the dead,
Self-slaughtered, from the unready corse is torn,
Then Minos, in the seventh gulf to mourn,
Consigns it. Here on no set space it falls,
But cast at random, and its roots it strikes
In marsh or rock, and boughs and thorny spikes
Grow upward. On its leaves the harpies feed,
Tearing, and where the broken twiglets bleed
Pain finds its outlet.
When the trumpet calls,
We all, with those who earthly flesh regain,
Shall upward troop, but that our hand hath slain
We may not enter, as is just. The Vale
Of Judgment when we leave we each shall hale
Our bodies slain behind us, till we reach
The dismal thorns we left, and each on each

Shall hang them. Every trunk of every shade
Bent with the weight of that itself betrayed."

We still were listening, lest more words should come
From this sad spirit, when rose such noise anear
That all the wailings of the woods were dumb
Before it, and we paused, as those who hear
The boar-hunt plunging through the brake, and nigh,
Crashed boughs, and rush of beasts that chase and fly,
Approaching where they stand; and forth there burst
Two spirits torn and bare, and cried the first,
"Befriend me, Death!" and cried the one behind,
"Ah, Lano, swifter legs than mine ye show,
But Toppo's tourney found thy limbs more slow."

Thereat he made no further pace, but low
Crawled 'neath the densest bush the woods contained,
And the next instant, as the shade he gained,
A rush of hell-hounds on his chase there came.
Wild on the bush they leapt to trace and claim
Their hiding victim, sinking fang and claw
In him who squatted in its midst. They rent
The writhing limbs, and diverse ways they went,
Carrying the fragments that they tore.

My guide
Now led my steps the damaged bush beside,
That loud lamented. Severed boughs we saw,
And torn twigs bleeding. In its pain it made
Protest, "Jacopo da Sant' Andrea!
What gain was here to make my leaves thy shade?
What condemnation for thy sins is mine?"

My Master questioned it, "Who art thou, say,
So bruised and injured in a strife not thine?"

It answered, "Ye that some strange fate hath led
To see me mangled and discomfited,
I pray ye closely round my foot to lay
The boughs and leaves their violence strawed away.
In that fair city of the plain I dwelt
Which once to Mars, its earliest patron, knelt,
And then the Baptist in his place preferred,
And earned thereby the war-god's enmity.
So that, except on Arno's bridge there stands
His statue yet, those men with useless hands
Had toiled, from ashes of the Huns, again
To build it in the years of Charlemagne.

"I have no name: I have no tale to say.
I made a gibbet of my house. Ye see
The end in this, the doleful price I pay."

CANTO XIV

LOVE in my heart for that dear home of mine
Compelled me. To the nameless Florentine
I did the service that he asked. I laid
The gathered twigs against his trunk.
We left
That grove of men, of human form bereft
By their own violence, and before us lay
A space so hateful that I shrank afraid,
For surely none might cross it.
Here, I say,
The third sad circlet wide before us spread,
A desert, by the dark wood garlanded,
As that is belted by the boiling fosse.
A desert which the hardiest might not cross
Was here. The Libyan waste where Cato led
The remnant of the host of Pompey, shows
Dry sand alike, but oh, what heavier woes,
Vengeance of God! what woes were here! Who
boast
They fear not Heaven, before that dreadful coast
Have come not, or they would not doubt their dread!

Strewn on the sands the naked souls I saw
Lamenting loudly. Some by diverse law
Lay flat: some crouched: some madly raced, and
these,
More numerous far, by milder cries conveyed
A lesser torment than the souls that stayed
Fixed on one spot.
Upon that concourse dire
Slow flakes were falling of dilated fire,
Straight downward, as the Alpine snows descend,
When no wind stirs the stillness.
As there came
From burning skies the separate flakes of flame
Upon the host that Alexander led
Across the torrid Indian plains—and they
Stamped the red ashes lest they join and spread,
And all be conflagration—so the heat
Flaked downward in a slow unceasing sheet,
On sand re-kindled with recruited fire,
Like tinder that the flint and steel ignite.
Here was the dance of woven hands! in vain
That brushed aside the settling points of pain.

I said, "O thou, whom all these different hells
Obey—save those gate-demons obdurate—
Who yonder lies, whose fierce disdain repels
The eternal doom, and with a heart as great
As all his ruin, beneath the torturing rain

Contorted, moves not, nor laments?"
My guide
I questioned, but the rebel shade replied,
"Dead am I, but yet my living heart unslain
Outequals Heaven. Though this relentless rain
Fall ever; though Jove the toiling knave should tire
From whom he snatched the bolt of previous fire
That first transfixed me; though he tire alike
All Etna's smiths, there is no power to strike
Shall make me quail. Let all His force employ,
He shall not taste the fierce exultant joy
To break me, suppliant."
I had yet to learn
My guide's hard voice, that in slow words and stern
Made answer. "Think'st thou then, O Capaneus,
Thy wrath makes answer to the wrath of Zeus?
Or God regards it? But thy rageful pride,
Against thee with the outer fires allied,
Makes heavier torment for thy bane, and so
Is penal only to thyself—Behold,"
—With gentler voice again assumed, my guide
Turned to me, as the sinner's tale he told—
"That lord, who once with six like kings was foe
To Thebes, and sieged it. Then his boast, as now,
That God he equalled. But his words avow
The justice of his doom, and impotent
Against regardless Heaven, they ornament

His breast most fitly—Follow where I tread—
—Avoid the sand."
With careful steps he led
Along the margin of the mournful wood,
And spake no more, until at length we stood
Where a thin river of most doleful red
(I shudder, thinking), from the sighing trees
Flowed outward. As the stream the harlots share
Flows outward from beneath Bulicame,
So this ran forward through the sand. Stone-bare
Its bottom, stone its shelving sides, and grey
The stony margins of its course. By these
I judged that here we crossed the fiery plain
Which else repelled us—But my guide again
Was speaking.
"Since the doleful gate ye passed,
Which still for all creation, first and last,
Stands wide, no sights of wonder seen compare
With this slight stream, whose margins cold and
bare
No fires can vanquish, whose red waters quench
Hell's heat, and burn not."
"Master," I desired,
"For hunger wakened, grant the food required."

"Far out in ocean lies an island waste
Whose King, when once the early world was chaste,
Ruled all men. In the midst a mountain lies,

Ida, that once was fair to stormless skies,
Peace of still nights and languorous noons it had,
With murmuring leaves and falling waters glad
(Cybele there the Heavenly Child concealed);
Now lies it barer than a salted field,
Than some outdated use more desolate,
Abandoned, naked, in the change of fate.

"A giant of Eld within this mountain stands;
From Damietta with rejecting hands
He turns, and Romeward holds his eyes, as she
Who in her mirror gazes fixedly.
His head is all of purest gold: his breast
And arms are silver of the finest test:
Then all is brazen to the forking cleft:
Iron is the right leg only, but the left
Hath the foot also of the like: of clay
The dexter foot, on which he leans alway.
This giant throughout, except the golden head,
Is cracked, and from the fissure tears are shed,
And these sink downward through the rocks, until
They reach Hell's levels, and form the springs that fill
The sunless gulf we passed of Acheron,
And, draining thence, the Styx, and Phlegethon,
Till downward by this straitened conduit passed
Where all descent is ended, form at last
The lake I tell not, for thine eyes shall see."

I asked him, "If this stream from hell to hell
Descend continuous, I discern not well
Why in the loftier circles nought I saw?"

He said, "As downward, tier by tier, we draw
Toward the narrowing centre, still the bound
We circle leftward, yet the slanting round
Is incompleted; hence new sights to meet
Ye must not marvel."
"Master," I replied,
"One question more. Of Lethe nought ye say,
Nor speak of Phlegethon. Across our way
Comes either?"
"Surely, in this scarlet tide
The one flows past ye. But at Lethe's side
Thy feet shall stand in other air than this,
For Lethe flows not through the lost abyss,
But those repentant, from their guilt made free,
Shall find it.—Follow boldly where I tread
The stone. Not here the burning sand can spread;
Nor the red rain molest from overhead."

CANTO XV

WE held the margin of the scarlet stream,
The cold grey stones beneath our feet. A steam
Arising from the water, overhead
A canopy that roofed the causeway spread,
Which quenched the fire descending.
As the dyke
From Bruges to Cadsand, where the burghers dread
The arising tide, or as the bank alike
The Paduans build in winter, to forbear
The Brenta's floods, when Chiarentana knows
The feet of summer on the mountain snows,
Such were the bulwarks of the stream, though less
In height and thickness.
Far that wilderness
Of wailing boughs we left, till backward glance
Had failed to find it. Once a troop we met
That racing past us in their mournful dance
Reversed, and sharply were their glances set
To read us, as a tailor frowns to thread

The needle, when long years of toil have dimmed
The needed sight, or as men meeting peer
At twilight, when the rising moon is thin.

Of these, one caught me by the skirt, and said,
"O marvel!" and the face that heat had skimmed,
I yet recalled, and answered, "Art thou here,
My master?"
He replied, "Brief words to win,
I pray thee, O my son, consent that I
Go backward somewhat with thee, while my kin
Continue on the path we held."
I said,
"I do not grant it, but beseech: and more,
For those old days, when all thy learning's store
Was mine to pillage, if my guide permit,
Sit will I with thee here some space."
But he
Made answer, "Nay, for if we pause or sit,
There must we for a hundred years remain,
Powerless to writhe beneath the falling rain.
But I will walk beside thy skirts as now,
No farther than these penal laws allow,
And then my station in our band resume,
Who race, and wail our everlasting doom."

I dared not from my higher stand descend,
Nor might he to the causeway climb, and so

I walked as those in humble prayer who bend,
The while he paced the burning sand below.

He first enquired, "What chance or fate hath led
Thy feet, before thy mortal loss, to tread
A path so vacant?"
"In mid-life," I said,
"I wandered in a pathless waste, and there,
Refused of exit, in my last despair,
I was returning to its midst, when he
Who guides me came, and by this dreadful way
Will bring me home at last."
And he to me,
"I doubt it nought, for if thy destined star
Perceived I rightly, when fair life and clear
I with thee breathed, a different haven lay
Before thee than this heat to which we steer,
Who tempt High Heaven in all we speak and are.
And but for death's too soon determining,
Mine aid had cheered thee in thy later spring.

"But those, the thankless and malign, who came
To Florence from the rocks of Fiesole,
Who mixed not with a nobler race than they,
Still in their children hate thee, deed and name.
Where the sour sorb-trees fruit, shall figs abound?
Like are they even as our fathers found.
Greed envy, hauteur, are the signs they show.

Look that thou walk not in their ways. For though
The path be stony for thy feet to-day,
The time is near when in thy larger fame
Both parties for thy potent aid shall pray.
Then from the he-goat's teeth the grass be far!
But those thy kind, if any yet there be
Surviving of the sacred Roman seed,
Amidst the dense growth of the ranker weed,
Let the Fiesolan beasts, the where they lie,
Make their own litter for their natural sty."

I answered, "Master, had it lain with me
To choose my boon from Heaven, not where we are,
But in the clear air of the world above,
Thy words had guided. All my heart in love
Returns toward thee, as my thoughts recall
Thine image, patient, kind, beneficent,
That taught me, tireless, hour by hour, in all,
How by the growth of that which Heaven hath
lent,
Man wins to life immortal. While I live,
In nought but words—and grateful words I give—
Is still my power to thank thee. All you tell,
Mind-treasured, with a text remembered well,
I keep for One on whom I hope, that she
May comment further, as shall surely be
If her I reach hereafter. This I say
Meantime, let Fortune at her worst of will,

So conscience chide not, wreck my days: and still
The boor his mattock's baser laws obey."

My leader heard me, and a backward glance
Across his shoulder, to the right, he cast,
To where we talked, and answered, "What ye say,
Forget not in the days undawned."
But yet
I questioned Ser Brunetto, "Tell me they
Most famed on earth, who pay the godless debt
In torment of this fiery rain at last?"

He answered, "Some there be ye well may know,
But more that better should the world forget,
And time for speech is shortened. Briefly, here
Are clerks and scholars, all betrayed so low
By one defiling. Priscian here must run.
And of our city here Accorso's son,
Francesco. If such scurf thy mind admits,
That base one of the Arno howling sits,
Who, to Bacchiglione's bank transferred,
There left his sin-wrecked nerves.—But further word
I may not.—Yonder in the distance see
New smoke arising from the sandy waste.
Fresh folk race on with whom I must not be.—
Those writings mine by which on earth I live
Remember.—More I ask not."

Here in haste
He loosed my skirts, and turned, and seemed as they
Who at Verona's summer sports compete,
Naked, across the fields with flying feet,
To win the vesture green their speed to pay.

CANTO XVI

THE sandy plain was almost past. There rose
Such noise as murmurs through the hive. For near
We came to where the tainted water sheer
Falls to the level of the fraudulent,
The next sad circle. Ever past us went
The flying bands beneath the fiery rain,
Scattering the sharp tormenting flakes. Of those,
Three runners from a troop dividing came,
Who called me with one impulse, "Stranger, stay,
Who by the garb hast found this dreadful way
From our perverted city."
The searing flame
Had baked their limbs, and in the hardened flesh
New wounds were formed with every flake. Ah me!
Again in thought the piteous sight I see,
And make their anguish mine. My guide the while
Turned as they ran. "Wait here. For courtesy
Deserve they from thyself, than theirs to thee
More urgent. Only that the falling heat
Forbids, thyself with greater haste should meet

Their coming, than their own."
At that we paused,
And when they saw it their arresting cry
They ceased, and recommenced the general wail.

I might not reach them through the burning hail,
Nor might they to the causeway climb, nor run
Beside me, for the end was now so nigh,
Nor might they, lest more grief the torture caused,
Remain unmotioned in one place, and so
They circled, as the nude, oiled champions go,
Rotating, for the chance of grasp or blow
Watchful, but these their eyes so held on me,
That feet and neck perforce moved contrary,
As round they wheeled.
One hailed me first, "O thou,
Whose living feet, as some strange powers allow,
Resound among the shadows, if aught so base
As we who bake in this unfertile place
Thy mind regard, recall our earthly fame,
And heed our plea to learn thy later name.
He in whose footsteps I rotate, though now
So peeled and bare, when in clear light, was he,
Gualdrada's grandson, who so nobly wrought
In field and counsel both; the one ye see
Who treads the sand behind, in all men's thought
Should still be fragrant, Aldobrandi he;
And I, Jacopo Rusticucci. She,

That savage wife an ill fate gave, has brought
This misery on me."
Had some shelter shown
To guard me from the slow unceasing rain,
I had not shrunk to cross the heated plain,
To greet them in their grief, whose names are known
So highly, nor I think my Master's voice
Had chid me; but their aspects, baked and dried,
Repelled and warned me.
"Not contempt," I cried,
"But sorrow in my heart since first my guide
Prepared me to expect such names, has grown,
And will not leave me soon. Alike we own
The same fair city, where your deeds to-day
Are told not seldom, and true men rejoice
Who hear them. From the bitter gall I go
The fruit to find, and yet descend more low
To Hell's deep centre ere I climb."
He said,
"Thy spirit long within thy members dwell,
And fame behind thee shine! But speak I pray
If valour quite and noble grace have fled
From our loved city. For one, whose place in Hell
Was filled but late,—with yonder troop he burns,—
Torments us largelier than the pain he learns,
With tales of its befalling. Is there now
Such dearth of honour, lifted once so high?"

And my heart failed me for direct reply,
But with uplifted face I cried, "O thou,
My Florence! Not thy fallen tears are dry
For plebeian strangers in thy halls, and pride
And riot extolled, and honour crucified."

And these that heard, their glances from me drew,
And at each other gazed, as men that knew
My confirmation, and divined it true.

At length they answered in one voice, "If there,
As here, the truth unharmed thy lips may dare,
Blest art thou! If from this unlighted air
Again ye climb to where the stars are bare,
When with rejoicing heart *I once was there*
Thy thought looks backward, let thy words to men
Exalt our names for that which late we were."

At this they broke their giddy wheel, and then
More swiftly than the heart could breathe Amen
With legs like wings, across the sand they fled,
And we went forward once again.
So near
The sound of waters now, I scarce could hear
My leader's voice. As that first stream to head
From Monte Viso's height a separate way
Seaward, its quieter name and loftier bed
Forgets at Forli, and in sheer descent

Above San Benedetto's towers resounds
(There where a thousand in its wealthy bounds
Might refuge, hindered by the sheltered few),
So here the red stream to the nether pit
Fell headlong, echoing through the void.
I wore
A cord girt round me (once I thought to snare
That painted pard of which I spoke before,
So noosed), and this my guide commanded me
To loose, and reached it from me coiled, and there
Far outward flung it in the blank abyss.

The blackness gulped it, while I thought, "From this,
An act so strange, must spring new mystery,—
How fixed he gazes where it sank,—and he,
As though he heard me, answered. Ah, what care,
What caution should we yield to Those who see
Not the deed only, but the thought!
He said,
"I signalled That which rises while I speak,
And makes thy question clear."
A man may dread
Truth more than falsehood to his friends to speak,
When truth than falsehood shows more wild, and weak
Of proof is that he inly knows, but I
Am barred from silence. Reader, truth I swear,

By all my hope of fame this work shall bear,
That slowly through the gross and fetid air
A Shape swam upward. As the mariners see
Their comrade rising from the depths, who dived
An anchor tangled in the rocks to free,
Against the brink the wingless bulk arrived.

CANTO XVII

BEHOLD the reptile with the stinging tail,
That mountains hold not, nor strong walls avail
To bar, nor any weapons wound. Behold
Him who diseases all the world with guile."

So spake my guide, and to the monster signed
To join us where the causeway ceased, and he,
That shape of loathsome fraud, swam warily
Landward, and rested there his bust, the while
The undulations of his tail unrolled
Trailed outward in the hollow dark behind.

His face was human, with a glance benign,
Kindly, and just, and mild, but all beside
Was reptile to the venomed fork. Two paws
Were hairy to the armpits. Bright design
And various colour patterned all his hide
On breast and flank, in knots and circles drawn;
Splendid as broidered cloths that mock the dawn,
From Smyrna, or the looms of Tartary,

Or those Arachne wove.
As oft we see
The wherries half afloat and half ashore,
Or as the German beaver waits his prey,
So on the brink the unclean monster lay,
Which brims the desert with containing stone;
The bust reposing, and the tail alone
Still twisting, restless in the void: it bore
A forked end, venomed as the scorpions are.

Then spake my guide, "Along the dreadful beach
Now must we for a little space, to reach
This shape malignant where it rests." We went
Down from the causeway on the right, and then
Ten steps across the stony marge, that so
Clear of the sand and fire our path should go
Along the skirting of the void, and when
We reached the monster, near at hand I knew
Along the edge of sand and stone, a row
Of sinners crouching.
Here my Master said,
"All kinds who suffer in this round to view,
Before we leave it, mark their mien who sit
Around the margin of the deeper pit.
Go forward to them, but be brief. The while
Converse I shortly with this beast of guile,
That his broad shoulders bear us down."
Thereat

Approached I to the doleful folk who sat
Thus on the torture's utmost bound. Their woe
Was streaming from their eyes. Above, below,
With restless movements, like the dog that lies
In summer, sleepless from the teasing flies,
And turns, now here, now there, with snout and paw
Smiting, so they with ceaseless hands and vain
Brushed the hot sand, or flicked the burning rain.

From face to face I looked, but nought I saw
Familiar, only that a purse there hung
From every neck, of various prints, and each,
The while they baked along the dismal beach,
Gazed down, as though his sure salvation lay
The emblazoned pouch within.
These shades among,
One gilded pouch an azure lion bore,
And one of gules a white goose showed, but more
I paused at one who on a silver ground
A pregnant sow gave azure, and thereon
He looked, and growled, "What dost thou? Get thee gone.
Thou art not of us. But since thy live return
My word may carry, let the Paduans learn
The place at my left side, that's vacant now,
Awaits Vitaliano." Like a cow
He writhed his mouth, and licked his nose, and said,

"Of Padua I; but these are Florentines
Around me. Oft they din my ears and cry,
We wait the sovereign cavalier, who shines
In silver. He shall bear the he-goats red
Upon the pouch that decks his throat."
But I
Would wait no longer, lest my guide were wroth,
And left these dolorous souls, pain-wearied now,
Beneath their burden of eternity,
While backward to the beast I went.
His haunch
My guide had climbed, and now to venture forth
He called me likewise. "Here I mount, that thou
Shalt ride before me; so the swinging tail,
More distant from thy fears, when out we launch,
Shall steer us downward. Here no steadier stair
Avails, but through the empty dark we sail.
Be bold, and fear not. For the fetid air
Shall bear us safely."
As the man that fears
The nearing ague, pale and shivering stands,
Already gazing on a bloodless nail,
Not strengthful even to leave the harmful shade,
Was I that heard. But yet with trembling hands
(As some poor knave his craven heart conceals,
Emboldened by his master's calm), I made
My passage to the shoulders broad. I tried
For words in which to beg my gentle guide

To lend his arm, but no sound came, and he,
Who knew my thoughts, and aided all, thereon
Reached round me while he ordered,—"Geryon,
Now start, and widely be thy circles spread,
And slow thy sinking." As the wherries slide
Downward and backward to the waiting tide,
So slid the monster from the bank, until,
Launched in free space, he outward turned his head
To face the void, and like an eel his tail
Was twisting, and his paws outreached to fill
With gathered air.
Did greater fears assail
When Phaëthon let the loose reins fall, that they
Were trailed through heaven, and burnt the Milky Way?
Or when Icarus felt the wax divide
From feathered loins, the while his father cried,
Far under, *Evil road is thine?* No sight
Was left me, save the beast I rode. The night
Was hollow where he swam. I might not know
That sank we, saving that the wind below
Beat upward, and against my face it blew
As round we wheeled in gradual loops. I knew,
Right-hand, the thunder of the whirlpool rise,
And outward stretched my head, with downward eyes,
And then shrank backward in more fear, for high
Through the gross darkness pierced a wailing cry,

And flickering lights were far beneath, whereby
I learnt our height, and by these sights aware
Of how we wheeled, and in what space of air,
And how descending, colder fear I knew.

But as the falcon, soaring long in vain,
Wing-wearied, stoops to reach the empty plain,
Though neither bird nor lure attract, the while
The falconer cries Alas! and winging slow
Disdainful, sullen, not for bait or guile
Is lured, but from his master sulks,—below
The ragged rocks at last, this Geryon,
By us defeated of his customed freight,
Alit, but lightened of my earthly weight
Like arrow from the loosened string was gone.

CANTO XVIII

NOW stood we in the utter depth of Hell,
For here ten trenches, with a central well,
Contain all traitors in their kinds. The wall
Is iron-grey stone that rings it round, and all
Its floors and bastions are alike. Its name
Is Malebolge. In this central shame
There lie ten moats that like a tenfold chain
Circle the wide and deep and dreadful well
That midmost sinks,—but in its place I tell
That horror.
As succeeding moats begird
A fortress, so, between the outer wall
And central shaft, the ten great chasms extend
In which the sin-divided traitors herd,
And as such moats are bridged, so cliffs remain
Connecting bank to bank, converging all
Where, at the margin of the pit, they end.

By the first fosse we stood, when Geryon shook
His back in anger from my weight, and shot
Upward again for his familiar prey.

My guide, left-hand, beneath the rampart took
A narrow path the ditch that edged, to find
The nearest crossing. In his steps behind
I walked, nor spared upon my right to look
Down on the crowd that filled the trench. Their lot
Revealed new torments, and new griefs, for they
Had live tormentors for their bane, unlike
The circles past.
Beneath the demons' ban
All-naked here in two great crowds they ran,
In opposite ways. For close beneath the dyke
The advancing concourse faced us all, but those
Lined in the further rank beside us moved,
Though livelier-motioned.
As at Rome were seen
The pilgrims in the year of Jubilee
Divided on the bridge,—one crowd was sent
Toward St. Peter's, one reversed that went
Toward Giordano,—so these shades I see
Herded. Behind them demons, horned and hooved,
With swinging scourges move. Their backs are grooved
And whealed with beating where the thongs have been.
Ah, how the first cut lifts their legs! Not one
That waits a second stroke to make him run.

As on we passed, a sinner stayed mine eye

Whose face familiar seemed. With bended head
He shunned my gaze, but to my guide I said,
"One was there in the troop that passed us by
Already that my sight had known." Thereat
He paused not only, but in courtesy
Some steps allowed me to return, that I
Might question whom I sought; and when we found
That hiding shade I cried aloud, "O thou!
In vain that wouldst, with careful glance on ground,
Avoid, except that features feigned ye wear,
I know ye, Venedico. What curst prank
Hath cast thee pickling in so foul a tank?"

He answered, sullen, "Nought I seek to tell,
But thy clear speech, that through the murk of Hell,
With recollection of the former air,
Resounds so strangely, all compels. I run
For no gained greed or spoil my lust had won.
Persuasions only brought my bane. I weep
That fair Ghisola shared the Marquis' sleep
By my contriving. That the truth, whate'er
The aspect that a viler tale may wear
In lips of gossip. Tell the Bolognese
It is not only I that run with these
From our false city. They crowd more numerous
Than all the infant tongues on earth to-day
That *Sipa* in their speech are taught to say,
Between the Reno and the Savena.

If witness wouldst thou seek, recall of us
Our avarice, that thyself hast known." But here
A chasing demon smote his haunch. "Away,
Pander! no women here are coin." He leapt
Wildly, and raced, and I returned, and kept
Behind mine escort.
In few steps a ridge
We reached, that jutted from the wall. A bridge
It made, outhollowed where the crowd below
Went through it. Here we inward turned and left
Forever all the loftier woes, wherein
They weep who wrought direct inferior sin;
And on the centre of the span my guide
Paused, in his thought for my desire, to show
Those shades who late, because they raced beside,
And did not meet us, might have passed unseen.

This train we faced, and watched the scourges plied
As hard as on the nearer side had been.
But one there came who shed no tears for pain,
And spake my guide, "Behold, his looks retain
Their regal right, as when his craft bereft
The Colchians of the ram; or passed his way
By Lemnos, where the women merciless
Their males had slain. The young Hypsipyle
(Who for her father's life had all misled)
In turn he cheated. Words of meaning fair,
And marriage gifts he gave, and left her there

Alone and pregnant. For that guilt to pay
He runs, and Medea weights his doom. All they
Whose hidden lives the like deceit confess
In this direction race. But longer stay
Deserves not. Pass we to the further trench."

The narrow path ran on, and somewhat sank,
But arching where it bridged the chasms.
A stench
Assailed us as we neared the next, beyond
The vapour cast from any stagnant pond
Of earth's excretions, scent and sight alike
Assailing. Moaning from the depth arose,
And gasping, and the noise of beating hands.
The banks were caked with filth the vapour left
In rolling upward from the dismal cleft,
Which sinks so deep that he alone who stands
On the mid archway of the bridge can see
Its hidden baseness. There, with useless blows,
I saw the wallowing crowd of culprits strike
The flowing filth from off their mouths. A head
Was there so soiled, I looked in doubt if he
Were priest or layman, till in wrath he bawled,
"Why dost thou scan me in my filthiness?
I am not soaking in a different mess
From those around me."
In return I called,
"Because I knew thee when thy hair was dry.

If rightly through thy present dirt I guess
Thou art Alessio."
Striving still to clear
His head, that like a rotten pumpkin showed,
He answered, "Yea, my flatteries brought me here.
Fair words alone have filled this dismal road."

Then spake my guide, "Look further out, for she,
That fouled sprawled harlot, whom in vain you see
Scrape off the filth with filthy nails, and try,
Now crouching at the side, now straining high,
To avoid the deluge of the dung, on earth
Was Thais, whose sweet tongue her lovers' worth
Exalted past her own. But longer stay
This trench deserves not, nor a look's delay."

CANTO XIX

O SIMON MAGUS! O ye pestilent!
Followers and thieves of him; who prostitute
For gold and silver things divine! Lament,
For here is your abiding. Here for you
The trumpet sounds damnation. Here I stand
On the third arch, by which your trench is spanned,
And what behold I? Heaven and earth unite
With these dark horrors, O Wisdom infinite!
To show the balance of thy scales is true.

Smooth on each wall the livid stone was dressed,
And pierced with holes, as where the martins nest,
But larger, and the stony floor contained
Round holes alike, in size and shape the same
As in my beauteous San Giovanni
The stands for the baptizers. Lately one
I broke to save a drowning life: let none
Revile me with an altered tale. There came
From out each hole two legs: the rest remained
Housed in the rock. The soles unceasingly
Burned, and the legs, that to the calf were bare,

So strained and kicked that any rope had burst
That held them. On the soles of these accurst
Bright flames that licked the outer surface were;
As on things oiled, they moved from heel to toe,
Flickering and dancing.
"Master, show the name
Of him whose legs from out the flood I see,
That twist and writhe and strain more furiously
Than all beside, and licked by livelier flame?"

He answered, "Somewhat if we leave the bridge,
And sideways follow the dividing ridge,
This fosse that severs from the next below,
There is a passage in the wall, too steep
For any human feet or hands to go,
But I will bear thee, if thou wilt, and so
Himself shall tell thee why so strongly leap
His fire-licked members."
I replied, "Thy will
Is mine, thou knowest. For if my voice were still,
My mind were naked to thy thought."
Left-hand
We turned along the lower boundary,
And here my Master bore me down, until
Upon the perforated flood to stand
He set me safely. Where he placed me down
I saw the lamentable legs of him
Who writhed so hardly.

"Whosoe'er thou be,
Who hast thy body thus reversed," I cried,
"Save by thy doom the power of speech has died,
Unhappy, answer!" As the friar must bend,
Confessing him who in his grave is penned,
For some perfidious murder judged to die
Head downwards; who, to more his fate extend,
Prolongs confession, while the spades delay,
So to the entrance of the hole did I
Stoop down, and upward rose a voice, "Art here
Already, Boniface? Before the year
The writ foretold me? Hast thou tired so soon
Of that dear wealth which was the tempting boon
For which thou didst the Bride of Christ betray?
—Won by deceit, and cast in spoils away."

And I stood wildered, till my Master said,
"Delay not thy reply, *I am not he*
Whom thou believest."
This I called, whereon
The spirit madly wrenched his feet, and cried
With weeping voice, "Then what concern with me
Thy steps to this unholy place has led?
By that Great Mantle from my shoulders gone,
The She-bear whelped me, and her cubs I tried
To feed and foster, and exalt their pride.
Much gold I pursed, and straitly pursed am I;
And here I wait until the next shall die

And take my place, and in that joyful hour
I join the earlier of our kind, acower
Beneath the fissures of the stones that lie.

"But more already have I baked," he said,
"And longer stood on my inverted head,
Than he that follows in my place shall know.
There comes a shepherd from the West. Bordeaux
Shall give the Church a viler lord than he
And I together in our deeds should be.
For like that Jason of the Maccabees
Who bought God's church, and bent his heathen knees
To alien altars, shall he prove, and so,
As to his guilt his king complaisant showed,
The king of France shall take that impious road."

I know not if I spoke too foolish-bold,
But in this strain I answered, "Say what gold
Our Lord from Peter for His keys required?
Or by Matthias next was Peter hired
To yield that office that the guilty lost?
But justly dost thou pay the penal cost
Of thy betrayal. Keep that golden fee
That made thee false to Charles of Sicily
As best thou mayst. And but those Keys revered,
Which in glad life thy hands have turned, repress
Mine heart's indignant wrath, the nakedness

Of all thou wast, my harder words should say.
For avarice in thy Seat its guilt hath seared
Upon the conscience of mankind. It treads
The just man downward, and exalts the base.
A wrath foreshown by that Evangelist
Who saw the harlot with the seven heads
And the ten horns, who kept her virtuous place,
Pleasing her spouse, until the kings she kissed
In acts of fornication. Gods to you
Are gold and silver. In your eyes they shine
Deities a hundred, while the idolater,
That in your pride you excommunicate,
To one false god bends only. Constantine!
What countless evils through the years accrue,
Not that thou lovedst God's spouse, but gave to her
A wealth unseemly for her lowly state."

As thus mine indignation spake, below
If conscience waked or rage I may not know,
But wild and furious sprawled his feet. My guide
I glanced at, fearful lest his looks should chide,
And faced assent. Again he lifted me,
And by that path the boldest goat had shunned,
He bore me to the crossway back. Beneath,
The fifth great cleft gave other woes to see.

CANTO XX

ANOTHER valley in its turn I tell.
Another guilt, another depth of hell,
Extends beneath. The great trench circular
We gazed on from the crossing arch, and far
I saw that silent weeping crowd and slow
That moves around it, as the chanters go
In earthly process of the Litanies.
But other cause for shortened steps have these,
For when my distant glance I dropped more low
On those beneath, an unfamiliar woe
They showed, neck-twisted where the body joins,
Till each his own and not his neighbour's loins
Could gaze on while he walked, and for this cause
They needs went backwards. Some by Nature's laws
Distorting palsies so may wrench, but I
Have seen nought like it, nor believe the sky
Looks down on such contortion.
Ye who read,
—God give ye vintage of the words ye heed—
Reflect how I, who watched our human seed
So altered and debased, with visage dry

Could watch them. They of heavenly form bereft
So far, that where the hinder parts are cleft
The tears rolled down them as they wept, and I,
Whose eyes thereat with kindred tears were wet,
Bowed down upon the cold stone parapet,
And wept beyond controlling.
But my guide
Spake sharply. "Art thou of those fools," he said,
"Whose pity liveth where it best were dead?
For what more impious than the thought that dares
Beyond man's province, and in fancy shares
The mind of the Creator? Raise thine head.
Look up! For near us is Amphiaraüs
For whom Hell gaped. The wondering Thebans cried,
'Why dost thou leave the war? Why hasten thus
Thy chariot horses down the steep?' But he
Nor paused, nor turned, till Minos' seat before
He stayed and trembled. Not this guise he wore
In that proud kinghood of his fame. Dost see
How loth his shoulders form his breast? He thought
To see far forward. Now his limbs are taught
To bear him backward. Next Tiresias,
Who smote too boldly with his sorcerous rod
The entangled snakes, and found his limbs transform
To woman's comelier contours, soft and warm;
Which aspect lasted till he smote again
The twisted dealers of the earlier bane.

The next is Aruns who, in Luni's hills,
Whereunder toil the Carrarese for bread,
Cave-couched amidst the marble; all the ills
That lay fore-fated in the thought of God,
He sought to read from unobstructed seas,
Or where the night her starry legions led.
Now walks he backward for his wage. With these
Observe that body with the wry-necked head
That onward shuffles, while her hair is spread
Upon the breasts we see not. Bear with me
A little while I tell. For here is she,
Manto, who after her long wandering
Found roothold in my native place. Her sire
Died, and the city of the Bacchic rites
Groaned to the scourging of an alien king,
And she went forth. In northern Italy
Where the wild Tyrol bars the German mire,
The hills are hollowed. Like an inland sea
The lake of Garda lies. A thousand streams
Flash foaming downward from the Alpine heights
From Garda to the Val Camonica
To feed it, till the basin brims, and then
Flows over at a point where all the sees,
Trentine and Brescian and Veronese,
Unite, that all their passing priests it seems
Might bless the men that dwell there. Builded strong,
To tame the Brescian and the Bergamese,

A fortress on the lower shore is seen,
And pouring outward through the pastures green,
The Garda's waters, now the Mincio,
Flow downward to Governo. First they flow
Clear, rapid, till, the level reached, they spread
In marshes stagnant, where are fevers bred
When summer heats them.
Here that virgin came,
And saw bare land amidst the reedy fen
Where no man lived. The arts we may not name
To practice, secret, with her acolytes,
This barren place she chose, and dwelt, and here
Left her vacated corse. The changing year
Saw others, guiltless of her dreadful rites,
Ingathering for the strength the marshes gave
In troublous times. On those dead bones they built
A city, and for that remembered grave
They called it Mantua. Once a race it held
More numerous, and of nobler race than now,
Before the infatuate Casalodi spilt
(Blindly by Pinamonte's craft impelled),
The lives of those who served him. This believe;
Nor other tales defrauding truth receive
Of how my city from the marsh arose."

I answered, "Master, other tale would be
Quenched coal and lifeless, since thy grace allow

That truth I hear. But wilt thou bear with me
That backward turns my mind to these that move
In that sad process underneath?"
He said:
"Regard thou him whose dusky shoulders spread
His weight of beard. A Grecian augur he
When Greece so empty of its males became
That scarce the cradles held them. Aulis heard
Eurypilus and Calchas speak the word
That loosed the cables of their ships. The tale
I told before in my great tragedy,
As well thou knowest. And here Eurypilus
Beneath thee moves. The next is Michael Scot,
Lean-flanked, who could by magic artistry
Against the demons' subtlest wiles prevail.
Guido Bonatti comes behind, and next
Asdente weeps that his vain mind forgot
His bench and leather. Mark those crones unsexed
That follow. Witchcraft with their waxen dolls
And mystic herbs they wrought, and left therefor
The seemly ordered life which Heaven extols,
The loom and needle. But the time permits
No more to tarry. Come! The western wave
At Seville yields the moon her watery grave.
Full was she two days since, that late ye saw
So thinly crescent in the pathless wood."

We left them, twisted in their sorcerous pits,
Conversing as we onward walked, until
We reached the shadow of a darker ill,
When gazing down the fifth black chasm we stood.

CANTO XXI

NOW looked we downward on a darker ditch
Than those preceding. As the bubbling pitch
Boils in the great Venetian arsenal,
To caulk the wave-beat ships, when winter's call
In-herds them from repulsing seas; and there
One builds anew, and one with hard repair
Plugs the cracked ribs that heat and cold have strained,
And many friendless winds have buffeted
In many wanderings on the ocean ways.
One mends the injured stern, and one the head,
One fashions oars, one joins the broken stays,
One sews the jib, one lends his aid to spread
New mainsail for the rotten sheet and stained
That drew them inward. So they toil beside
The pitchy cauldron—so the boiling here
Filled, like a cauldron, all the trench entire,
That art Divine, and never earthly fire,
So heated. Breaking on the surface wide
Were bubbles only. Nought beside I saw,

Save that the blackness heaved, and then compressed,
Unceasing.
Sight of that retentive maw
Drew my fixed gaze, until my leader's cry
Alarmed me sharply, "Guard thee! Guard!" and I
Stayed not to look, but toward him leapt, nor guessed
Why called he, till within that safety pressed
Of his sure arm I turned me round, and there,
Across the bridge, a coal-black demon ran.
How closer shrank I from that fierce aspect!
How near the menace of the wings outspread
And lightfoot speed! His shoulders sharp and high
Sustained the haunches of a hanging man,
Whose ankles in his claws were fast.
He said:
"Ho, Taloned of the Fifth Damnation! Here
Is Santa Zita's Elder! Thrust him down!
While I for others of the sinful town
Go backward. Plenty there this goal shall win,
For all men there contrive the barterer's sin,
—*Except, of course, Bonturo!*"
From the bridge
He cast him, twirling. From that weight's relief
Straightening, he mounted up the stony ridge
So swift, I thought that never hound on thief
Was loosed so gladly.

Plunging headlong in
The sinner sank, and rose convulsed, and writhed,
Arching his back as one who prays. There came
A cackling laughter from beneath the bridge,
And flying demons rose. "This Holy Place,"
They mocked, "befits a sanctimonious face,
But nought it saves thee from thy bathing. Ho!
Ye swim not here as in the Serchio.
It is not willed a naked part to show,
Except the knives shall slice it."

As the cooks
Around the boiler group with waiting prongs,
To thrust the carcase if it rise too far
Above the broth that stews it, so did they
The twisting sinner with a score of hooks,
Clamoring derisive. "Find thy place below,
Where mayst thou pilfer in thy private way
If aught attract thee there."

My Master said,
"Wait here, and fear not. Where the buttress swells
Crouch down, and hide, and whatsoe'er to me
Of outrage or repulse you hear or see
You need not tremble. Through the deeper hells
An earlier time I came, and proved their dread."

I crouched—and trembled. Down the central bridge
He went and left me. Ere he gained the ridge

That barred it from the next succeeding woe
The demons marked him. As the dogs outfly,
White-fanged and deafening, if a varlet show
A mood to linger at the gate, they came,
A rush of wings and drags outreached. Stout heart
He needed surely. But his voice outrang
Steadfast. "No victim for your rage am I.
Stand back! Ye know the heavy stripes that tame
Revolt. What! Would ye drag me? Stand apart.
Let one come forward. When he learns my name
Then choose ye freely."

Croaked the grisly crew,
"Let Foultail test him," and the fiend advanced
Malignly confident. "What power," he said,
"Delays we bathe thee? Leap, or fork and fang
Shall teach it!" Backward at the troop he glanced,
That stirred impatient. But my leader knew
The Power that cloaked him.

"Thinkest thou thus, misled,
I blundered downward for thy sport? I come
Divinely messaged, where propitious fate
Hath willed another through these depths to show.
The greater demons at the outer gate
Have learnt it. Scatheless past thy ward we go.
To me the outrage of thy cries is dumb.
Thy hooks are pointless."

At these words the fiend,
Sore daunted, drooped his ghastly tool, and cried,

"We must not strike him," to the rest, and I,
Who till this time the friending buttress screened,
My guide called forward. At the word I ran
Across the fearful space to reach his side,
The demons crowding as I came. (I saw
The footmen at Caprona once, who shrank
As I did, when they looked, and rank on rank
Their weaponed foes were round them, and they stood
Protected only by the rules of war
Against the crowd that yelled their deaths.) They would
The thing they dared not, but their lust began
To conquer prudence. Each the next would egg
To nick me. "Score him on the rump."—"Do thou."—
"Do thou then."—"Hook him, Hellbat, by the leg."

But Foultail railed against them, "Cease thee now,
Scarmiglione, lest the price we pay."
And then to us,—"Ye seek a broken way.
A thousand and two hundred years ago
And sixty-six, it was but yesterday,
And five hours later, Hell's foundations so
Were wrenched and shaken, that the bridge beyond
Was flung in fragments to the chasm below.
Along the margin of the boiling pond
Ye needs must go some distance. There I send

A swift patrol, lest any crawling wretch
Beyond the pitch his blackened limbs extend.
Ye may go safely in their guard. They know
Too well to trick ye. Alichino here,
And Calcabrina, and Cagnazzo thou,
With Ciriatto of the tusks, and those
Who form the ten that Barbariccia leads,
Fanged Draghignazzo, Graffiacane,
Hellbat, and Libicocco next, and he
That deepest-hued in peculation glows,
Fierce Rubicante. Oft the boiling breeds
Such boldness that the sinners seek relief
Along the margin, to their greater grief.
Search well. But guide these twain in safety through,
Along the crags that edge the boiling glue,
Until ye reach the nearest cliff that stands
Unbroken, and bisects the trench."
I said,
"O Master, let us seek the path unled
Than in such escort! Mark them glance and grin.
They nudge, expectant that their sport begin
When once from Foultail's sight we pass. For me,
I would not further, on a path I see
More dreadful hourly."
"Fear thou nought for that,"
My Master answered; "thee they grin not at,
But in the malice of their hope to fetch

Clear of the pond and flay some crawling wretch
That leaves the boiling."
By the leftward bank
We then went forward in that grisly rank.

CANTO XXII

MUCH have I seen of camps and moving men,
But not that escort of the demons ten
My mind compares. Not Campaldino saw
Such sight uncouth; nor any rout of war,
Pageant or masque, grotesque or carnival,
Mummery or tilt, can aught their like recall.
Nought in Italian lands, or lands afar,
Nor barque by landfall steered, or leading star,
Nought moves, on earth or wave or heavens of air,
Like those swart fiends, our chosen escort, were.
"Who wills to church must there with saints consort:
Who seeks the tavern must with guzzlers sport."
So runs the proverb. With these demons we
Paced the black verge that ringed the dreadful sea.
Yet little heed my mind allowed to know
Their various aspects vile. For seethed below
That lake of pitch the where in burning heat
The unclean of hand received their payment meet.
Most was I bent to learn the dole they knew
Whose sins their souls within that cauldron threw.

As dolphins, restless of the storm to be,
Arch their swift backs above the heaving sea,
Whereby the seamen, peril-warned, prepare
To meet fierce winds with decks and spars stripped bare,
So seemed, one instant's snatched release to gain,
Some sinner twisting in that boiling pain,
A shorter moment than the lightnings take,
Would arch his back from out the burning lake.
As wary frogs that round the stagnant ditch
Show noses only, so the bubbling pitch
Showed eyes of sinners, wide in watchful fright,
That instant as the taloned imps they sight
Sank in the slime. And as one frog may stay,
While all beside have dived and slipped away,
I saw (and shudder still in thought to see),
How one delayed, and Graffiacani
Bared his great claws, and clutched the diving head
By pitchy locks, and from that burning bed
Forth hauled him. So perchance yourselves have seen
A fresh-speared otter from the water green
Dragged, writhing.
Closing round their piteous prey,
"O rend him, Rubicante, rend and flay!"
Cried the obscene crew. But I to Virgil then,

"O Master, couldst thou of the souls of men
Learn whom they seize, ere yet, their work complete,
They backward fling him to the liquid heat?"

Close stepped my guide, at which the fiends controlled
Parted and stilled, and half reluctant hold
They loosed, the while he asked what sinful name
Men spake on earth that there to torture came.
And while the fiends their horrid trade delayed,
The wretch, ere yet his quivering pelt was flayed,
Gave answer. "Fathered by a waster wild,
Born in Navarre, my mother sold her child,
Constrained by hunger, to a lord's employ;
Then to King Thibault (yet himself a boy),
My fawning service passed. By bribe and cheat
I bought the lease of this unending heat."

As thus constrained his trembling lips allowed
The sin that cast him to that grisly crowd,
Side-thrust beneath his belly's rounded cup
The tusk of Ciriatto ripped him up.

As some caught mouse by wicked cats at play
Is tossed and toyed, he fared; but "Stand away!"
Snarled Barbariccia, while his limbs he twined
The victim round, and held, before, behind,

Joined in one piece. "If more thou wouldst," he said,
"Ask, ere we cast him to the deathless dead!"
And while the fiends forewent their labor sweet
To fling his entrails to the bubbling heat,
My Master asked him, "In the boiling flood
What others meet ye of your country's blood?"
He answered, "One not distant far from those,
A wretch Sardinian born, beside me rose
Last ere they snatched me from the lake away.
I would with him in scalding heat I lay
From slitting tusk secure, and plunging prong!"

But Libicocco cried "We wait too long!"
And ere his hook the chiefer fiend could stay,
Mangling and tearing from the bone away
The greater forepart of the arm, it fell.
While Draghignazzo next, a thought more slow,
Snatched downward, reaching for the legs below,
And clamoring rose again those birds of Hell.
But their Decurion wheeled, and loose thereat
His tortured captive wrenched, and railed and spat,
Cursing discordant till they stilled.
Once more
My Master asked him, "When they dragged ashore
Your form reluctant from the burning slime
Whom left ye happier?"
He, some passing time,

Gazed at his wound, with vacant eyes; but when
Were restless motions from the demons ten,
Made hurrying answer. "Friar Gomita he,
That Pisa's lord, across Sardinia's sea,
Sent, trustful, for Gallura's rule. He made
His profit ever from his trust betrayed.
His lord's worst foes the smoothing bribe could pay,
And work his loss their quiet unhindered way:
A pot was he where every fraud would stew;
No theft was whispered but the worse he knew:
No knave was he, but very king, of wrong.
Michel, who sang on earth an equal song,
And held the neighbouring rule, beside him lies"—
But here he caught the Hell-bird's glittering eyes
Fixed on him, lustful for the hindered prey,
And all his cunning mind extreme of fear
Made active—"surely, would ye seek to hear
Tuscan or Lombard that on earth ye knew,
I need but call to bring the tortured crew.
For ever, if the demon chase be slack,
And one from out the scald a scourgeless back
Heaves from the clinging pitch, and crawls impune
Out on the marsh, with cautious signal soon
He whistles to his boiling mates to try
The like relief; and in such note will I
So call them. Only bid the demon band
Some little backward in the shades to stand,
To give them heart."

His snout Cagnazzo raised,
Contemptuous of the fraud, and sniffed, and gazed
Derisive round. "The sinner thinks," he said,
"To plunge once more in that infernal bed,
When backward in the shades we hide."
But he
Whined with new guile. "I might not hope to flee
Thy swifter wings. I only thought to know
Those others rendered to a kindred woe,
As malice moved me."
Swift Alichino
Gave answer. "If the steep descent ye try
We shall not trace your steps, but stooping fly
Straight for the pitch, and wait you there to rend.
Call whom ye will, but if ye fraud intend
Dear price ye pay.—We will the slope ascend
Some space, and o'er the bank's reverse conceal
Our waiting wings, the while the larger meal
His malice brings us." Thus, their mood reversed,
The cheat prevailed. Cagnazzo first, who first
Derided, now the offered sport would try,
To draw more victims from their steaming sty.

The demons turned their eyes, the ridge to climb,
A moment upward. Swift his chosen time
The desperate sinner seized, and leapt.
Aware
Instant, while yet he cleft the yielding air,

The broad-winged demon that had snapped the
snare,
Grouped his close vans, and like a falling kite
Shot headlong lakeward, as a stone should smite.
Yet deftly, as the sinner sank from sight,
With wings outreached, and lifted breast aright
Retrieved, and screaming in his rage of prey
Skimmed the black gulf.
But close behind his way
Came Calcabrina, great of wing as he,
And all his rage the baffled chase to see
Against Alichino turned. New sport we saw.
Demon on demon leapt, with tooth and claw
Tearing. For while the prey they plunged to pluck
Sank in the seething like a diving duck,
The frustrate falcons flapped and clutched, and tore,
Smote with wide wings, and closed and overbore
Each other, turning in mid-air, and fell.

Were laughter here, if any depth of Hell
Could hold it. Flapped they on that surface hot,
Their victims' torments theirs, and all forgot
Their mutual rage in screaming pain. They drew
Separate: they strove with desperate strength anew
Their wings to lift from out the holding glue,
But vainly.
Fast their fellow demons flew
With shrill laments above the vaporous ditch,

And while they sank within the boiling pitch,
From either side at Barbariccia's call
Lined banks, their mates with hooks and drags to
haul
To land. Still sinking as we turned away,
Sprawled on the marsh, the nightmare demons lay.

CANTO XXIII

WE did not wait that escort more, but trod
A silent path in thoughtful guise, as go
The Minor Friars through the streets arow,
One after one, and those renounced of God,
Demon and barterer, we left.
I thought
Of Æsop's fable of the frog that drew
The mouse behind it to the drowning flood,
And how that sinner in the boiling glue,
Beyond design, the chasing demons brought
To find a like disaster. Thought to thought
As Yea to Ay were kindred. Then my blood
Chilled through me as my mind advanced to see
How rage might wake against us, as the cause
Not only that the sinner missed their claws,
But that their comrades in such snare were caught,
And backward gazed I, and my guide besought,
"O Master, save thou hide thyself and me
Most swiftly, terror shakes my heart to see
Those demons tear us, for their broken sport.
Their malice, restive at our heels that ran,

If rage recruit it, not their leader's ban
Nor thought of later stripes shall hold. My fear
So urges that meseems the empty rear
Is dark with wings that chase us."
He replied,
"No leaded mirror moving at thy side
More instant would return thy shape than I
Receive thy thoughts unspoken. Rising nigh,
The rampart is not too precipitous
For careful scaling; if it falleth thus
Upon the further side, we soon shall stand
Beyond their peril."
Ere the ruse he planned
Was action, with a whirl of wings they came
Outrageous, imminent, but my guide (as she
Who wakens to the roar of nearing flame,
And reaches for the babe with hasty hand
That life outvalues, and no more delays,
Even for the covering of her shift, but forth
She flies incontinent), against their wrath
Upcaught me in his arms, and raced to gain
The rock's high ridge that was their boundary.
And on the verge he loosed his feet, and slid
The abrupt decline.
As fast as down the spout
The water gushes to the landmill's wheel,
So shot he down the shelving bank. The rout

Of chasing demons, e'er his feet could feel
The level depth, had reached the wall, but there
He feared them nothing, while they raged in vain,
For high controlling Providence provides
No serving demon strays beyond the sides
Of that sad hollow where his task is hid.

Now in recovered safety looked we round.
Beside us moved, with weeping eyes to ground,
A people clad in golden cloaks, whereon
To gaze was dazzling. Very tired and sad
Their looks, and slow their steps to pass belief.
And I, in doubt, who could not gauge their grief,
Gazed wondering. Such depth of hoods they had,
In shape as those the monks wear at Cologne;
In golden brilliance like their cloaks they shone.

O shining sepulchre of moldering bone!
For all within was lead:—such weight that those
In which the second Frederick burnt his foes
Were light as straw contrasted. Oh, what weight
In which to barter with eternal fate!

Left-hand we moved along their file, but though
They moved alike, they strained a pace so slow,
Bent with the load they bore, that every stride
A fresh face gave us that we moved beside:
And still from all the gasping sobs arose.

I asked my leader, "Will thy care provide
When next we pass whose name or tale I know,
That there we pause?"
From out a backward hood
There came a voice from one that understood
My Tuscan speech. "If here thou list to stay,
Whose feet so strangely dance the dismal way,
Thy wish may wait thee."
Then I turned and saw
Two shades that struggled, but the dreadful law
That held them, made their haste as nought. Desire
Was in their looks to reach us, and my guide
Commanded: "Pause, and keep some space beside
With gradual motions like their own."
We stayed
Some moments patient, though three strides entire
Had reached us. Nought they spake at first, but long
With slanting eyes they summed us, and at last,
Communing only to themselves, they said:
"How moves his throat! Can mortal life belong
To wanderers here? Or if their lives be past
How walk they through this trench ungarmented?"

And then to me: "O Tuscan, these sad pits
Form the last college of the hypocrites,
And more we tell thee if thou dost not scorn
To teach us of what race thyself wast born."

I answered: "I was born and nurtured nigh
Where Arno finds the blue reflected sky
A city's turrets pierce. By ways forbade,
Clothed with the living flesh that first I had,
A High Power leads me. But yourselves shall show
Why from your eyes distils this dismal woe,
And what the shining pain around you clad."

The nearer answered: "Jovial Friars were we.
I Catalano, Loderingo he:
Bologna-born, and Florence chose us twain,
From either faction, jointly to maintain
Her peace internal. Still thine eyes may meet,
In those charred ruins of Gardingo Street,
The witness what we were."
My tongue began,
"O Friars, your evil—" when I marked a man
Writhe on the ground. To feel their weight he lay
Nailed down with three great stakes across the way.

Friar Catalano caught my glance, and said:
"That wretch, cross-fixed, on whom in turn we tread,
Is he who counseled with the priests, *'For us*
It is expedient that one man should die—'
Naked and staked to bear our burdens thus
Annas alike, and all that council lie—
A seed of evil for the Jews were they."

I watched my Master gaze in wonder down
On that prone shade, outpulled and crucified
That from their weight he might not writhe aside,
Who there in everlasting exile lay,
But had not suffered when he passed that way
Beforetime. Nothing of his thought he said;
But later to the Friar he turned: "If nought
Of retribution wait thy word, I pray,
Thou wilt not here deny thine aid, but say
If further to the right in vain were sought
Some exit from this depth, or if we need
A loth return to make, and intercede
With those black angels that we left."
The Friar
Gave answer: "Nearer than ye think doth lie
The next of those convergent cliffs that span,
From the great barrier to the central pit,
These depths of pain. This only arch of it
Has fallen, but the slope a mortal man
May clamber, for the ruins pile so high
Toward the lower bank ye seek."
My guide
Pondered awhile: "If this be truth, he lied
Who hooks the peculators."
And the Friar
Gave nimble answer: "At Bologna well
We knew the devil, and all his works. A liar,
And father of all lies from there to Hell,

They called him."
Then with longer steps my guide,
And somewhat angered in his looks that so
The imp had dared him, forward went, and I
In his loved footsteps left their laden woe.

CANTO XXIV

IN that young month of the returning year
When, in Aquarius placed, the mounting sun
Shakes loose his hair a bolder course to run,
The hoarfrost takes his sister's face of fear,
A moment only. Then the husbandman,
As wanes the night before the equal day,
Looks forth, a world of winter-white to scan,
And knows the frugal store of roots and hay
Is ended, and laments, and smites his thigh,
And through the house as one distraught he goes;
But shortly forth again he looks, and knows
The world has changed its face, and cheerily
Takes crook, and chases out his flock to feed.
So I, that did my Master's anger heed,
Awhile was daunted, till we came to where
That tumbled ruin through the somber air
Rose darkly, when he turned with smile as sweet
As on that mountain when he stayed my feet
At our first meeting.
Careful glance he cast
Along the huge mound of the broken rock,

And then as one who picks his point at last,
And doubts no more, from block to tumbled block
He led me upward, with a reaching arm,
And voice that warned my blinder steps. No way
Was this for those of golden cloaks to flee,
That scarcely for his lighter frame, or me
His arm sustained, a trembling hold supplied;
And but that to the lower bank we strained
(For Malebolge to the central pit
Inward and downward slopes from every side),
I know not if my guide the crest had gained,
But sure I had not.
When my feet attained
The last rent fissure, the projecting stone
With failing strength I grasped, and reaching it,
My breath drained from me by that toil, to sit
Some space I thought, but while I sank he said:
"Thou must not rest thee here, but here and now
Make conquest of thy sloth, for while abed,
Forgetful of the hours, warm-blanketed,
Men rest, or sitting loose at ease, they find
No fame, but life consumes, they watch not how;
As foam on water, or as smoke in air,
A moment passes, and it is not there.
Arise! and with thy spirit's strength contend
Against the flesh that drags thee. Thus shall end
Revolt, except the ignoble soul allow
The body's weight to sink it. Not enough

Is wrought that thus the deeper trench we quit.
Be thine to comprehend, and with the wit
The will for action."

Narrow, steep and rough,
Yet rose the path across the ridge that led,
But shamed to hear my leader's words I feigned
A strength I had not. "In thy steps," I said,
"I follow, confident," and further speech
I made, the while the rampart's crest we gained,
To hide my faintness from myself. Thereat
A voice made answer from the further deep,
Bestial, and formless of clear words to reach
The hearer's mind, but not this loss forgat
The notes of wrath.

Above the further steep
Now stood we, but my living sight was vain
To pierce the blackness whence that awful cry
Reproached me.

"Master, while we here remain.
I hear, but nought it means, and nought I see
Down-gazing. Wilt thou that the further wall
We gain, and climbing by the shorter fall,
Perchance in safety our descents repeat?"

He said: "For fit request a fit reply
Is action only." Leading silently,
He crossed the bridge, and on the eighth surround
A vantage of sufficient sight I found

That showed the seventh and more dreadful woe
Than those behind. For serpents here I saw
Hideous and frightful in their throngs, as though
All Libya and the red Egyptian sea
Had swarmed them. While I write my heart at war
With recollection backward holds my blood,
Shuddering. For not the Libyan sands shall be,
Nor all the plagues of the Egyptian flood,
Nor all that Ethiopia spawns, alike
Prolific. Not the crested water-snake,
The cobra, nor the leaping jaculus,
The speckled death, the serpent formed to strike
From either end, such horror holds.
I saw
A people naked, with no hole to take
For refuge, blindly in their fear that ran
Amidst this ruthless and appalling throng.
O for the spotted heliotrope! that thus
They might escape unseen. But not this law
Could charms resist. To snakes their hands belong.
Snakes through their loins are pierced. I watched a
man
Against whose throat a sudden serpent bit,
More swiftly than the shortest word is writ
Take fire, and burn, and in his place there came
A little heap of ashes. As the flame
In cinders sank, a sight most marvellous
Was mine—the calcined heap reversed the wrong,

Arising to its human form. 'Tis said
The Phœnix thus, on tears of incense fed,
That eats no herb, or any coarser bread,
With each five hundred years is purified,
And rises thence as though it had not died,
From its own ash again incarnated.

But as some demon-haunted soul may fall
Unconscious, writhing, nor the fit recall,
But weak and pallid to his feet again
He struggles dumbly in bewildered pain,
So looked the sinner. What scale of Heaven was here
To weight a doom so dreadful, so severe?

"Who art thou?" asked my guide, and answered he:
"A short while since I rained from Tuscany
To this ferocious gutter. A life more beast
Than human pleased me there. Pistoia well
My savage carnal ways, till here I fell,
Denned, native, Vanni Fucci, mule, am I."

I answered: "Though thy bestial crimes to hell
Have flung thee rightly, yet I rede not well
Why to this lower depth thou cam'st?"
And he
Feigned not to hear, but in a dismal shame
Gazed blankly upward, till constrained he said,

"Not for those crimes of loud repute I came
To this relentless doom. Reluctfully
It wrenches all my heart with grief to say
My guilt—more bitter than when first the dead
I joined, and Minos cast me here. My sin
Was this, that having robbed the sacristry
I spake not, while Rampino tortured lay,
And della Nona died, a guilt to pay
Which was not theirs. For that false crime herein
The serpents take me at their lust—but thou
Shalt go not backward with light heart to tell
My townsmen of this hidden infamy,
Nor joy to watch me in this pass—I see
A thing that cometh on earth. Short year from now
Thy part shall from my native place expel
The Neri, and their wealth shall confiscate.
But then shall Florence cleanse her lawless state;
Thy faction, outcast from her palaces,
Shall suffer all they gave, till Mars shall bring
A flaming vapor of such fierce disease
From Val di Magra, that the trembling knees
Of each Bianco on Piceno's plain
Shall bleeding bow. I would not tell this thing
Could any prescience on thy part restrain
The sorrow for thee which my heart foresees."

CANTO XXV

HIS words he ended, and his bestial mind
Reverted to its impious use. He raised
Both hands in gestures of obscenity
Against the Eternal, till my heart inclined
To bless the serpents. One, that leapt behind
Just as he shouted, "Take it, God! at Thee
I aim it," twisted round his throat, to bind
His further utterance. One, his arms about,
Its tightening knots o'er wrists and elbows twined
To cease his antics. Ah, Pistoia! why
Dost never, when thy bitter factions burn
Their foemen's houses, and are sacked in turn,
The whole send upward to the cleansing sky
In one consuming? since thy sons exceed
The first corruptions of the godless seed
That built thee. All the infernal depths I trod
Revealed no shade with such contempt for God.

But while we looked, with sudden haste he fled,
And past us raced a Centaur-shape who said,
"Where hides the snarling thief I seek?"

I know
Maremma, nor believe its fens could show
So numerous snakes as round his haunches hung
And twisted in their wrath, and thereamong,
Even to the human part, behind his head
A fiery dragon broods with wings outspread,
That burn, and render all they reach to flame.

Then said my Master, "Cacus here we see,
Who made of old beneath Mount Aventine
Beneath his brethren, for the theft of shame
A lake of blood. To this great depth he came,
That there he wrought. He ceased his perfidy,
Taught by the raining blows of Hercules,—
A hundred mashed him, though he felt but ten."

On rushed the Centaur in his haste to seize
The fleeing shade, and while we gazed ahead
We saw not that beneath there came three men
That watched us, till they cried, "Who are ye there?"
Whereat the Centaur left our thoughts, and these
Possessed them. One man to his neighbour said,
"Why tarries Cianfa?" By that word aware
Of those that faced me, to my guide I signed
Desire for silence.

Reader, if this tale
Thy mind reject, I blame thee nought, for I

Look back, and memory here and credence find
Dispute. A monster with a serpent's tail,
And with six feet along the ground that ran,
Made halt before the three, and picked a man,
And leapt upon him. No clinging ivies twine
So closely. In his face its teeth it set.
Its forward feet behind his shoulders met.
Its belly on his belly pressed. Its feet
Strained to his sides and thighs, to backward meet.
Its tail between his legs, along his spine
Curled upwards. As a lighted paper burns
And blackens, but at first to brown it turns
Before the flames have reached it, so did they
Transform and blend, until you might not say
The serpent-hue was that, or this was man,
And then, as melted wax, their forms began
To merge and mingle. Cried his comrades, "Lo,
Where art—what art—which art thou, Agnello?
Art both or neither?" The two heads by now
Were one. The bodies were a monstrous sight.
A man was snake: a reptile walked upright.
With dragging steps it left us.
Hast thou seen
The lizards changing hedge? From side to side
They cross the sun-glare of the roadway wide
A baffling streak. So fast a reptile shot
Toward these two remaining. Smoking hot,
And black as peppercorn it showed. It leapt

And pierced the navel of the one. It stept
Some paces back, and crouched, and watched. Its eyes
Its victim held, and he with dull surprise
Yawning, as one by sleep or fever dazed,
No motion made to fly, but backward gazed
Tranced. From the reptile's mouth, the navel's hole,
There came two smokes that feeling through the air
Were joined. The serpent and the human soul
In this conjunction stayed. Let Lucan prate
No more the horror of Nasidius' fate,
Nor how Sabellus failed from sight. I bear
No envy to the tales that Ovid made
Of Cadmus to a serpent changed, or how
Sad Arethusa is a fountain now.
They did not dream the thing I saw. The shade
That once was man his dreadful doom obeyed.
He closed his feet. His legs and thighs as one
Were blended. All that to his form was done
The snake reversed. Its tail it cleft. The skin
On the divided parts I saw begin
To shed its scales and soften; while the man
Acquiring that the snake had lost, began
To alter snakelike his retractile limb.
Lengthened the worm's short arms: the arms of him
Shortened and scaled. The man's fifth member then
Lengthened and slit, the worm's hind legs to match.

The worm's hind legs their shrinking claws attach,
And blend to form the part concealed of men.

The copulating smoke around them spread.
The man grew bald. The needed hair was bred
Upon the snake's transforming parts. His head
The foul beast lifted, and arose upright.
The man fell prostrate. But the thievish light
Still kindled in their baleful eyes, the while
Their faces altered, and the shape erect,
—For which was human?—their completed guile
In altered visage showed. Its jaws withdrew.
A nose and lips it formed, and ears outgrew.
The while that other on the ground that lay,
Forked its thin tongue, and turned, and crawled away.
And like a snail that hides its horns, I saw
The ears receding in the serpent head.
Loud hissing down the dismal trench it sped,
And after ran the worm transformed, and tried
A sputtering speech.
But scarce my mind could think
Clear thought, or eyes see clearly, while the law
That ruled the refuse of this hateful sink
Changed and rechanged them. Yet I marked the last
Of those three shades, that slyly shrank aside,
Desirous only from my glance to hide,—

Puccio Sciancato. Him the serpents passed
Without molesting while I stayed. The one
I saw transformed was he for whom Gaville
Yet wails the vengeance that it cowered to feel,
Because his murder in its streets was done.

CANTO XXVI

REJOICE, my Florence! that thy lifted wings
Not only in the world's wide sunlight shine,
Not only o'er the waves of ocean beat;
In Hell's deep vaults an equal fame is thine.
Five thieves,—and every thief a Florentine!
So thought I grimly, as we turned to meet
The cliff's ascent. But if the morning brings
The mind God's counsel, if its dreams be true,
Then that dark end desired of Prato's hate,
And all thy sullen, greedful foes, for you
Comes quickly. Not that were to-day the date
It were too soon for those who love thee. Yea,
I would that that which cometh came to-day.
For grief that on my weaker age shall weigh
Were now less dreadful.
Rough the rising stair
That hard we clomb with foot and hand and knee,
And very silent all, and lonely there,
The ridge we crossed a keener grief to see.
Grief were it to gaze, and still that grief to me
Comes sharply, as my thoughts reluctant draw

Their wells of memory for the thing I saw.
With pain I speak, for if the holier law
Myself I hold, by any kindly star,
Or Power supernal, guided safely through
The world's stretched snares, I would not boast nor tell
As one who triumphs, that these depths of Hell
Contain such fruitage of our kind.
The view
Beneath us was an empty depth, wherethrough
Lights moved, abundant as the fireflies are
At even, when the gnats succeed the flies.
A myriad gleams the labourer sees who lies
Above them, resting, while the vale below
Already darkens to the night,—he toiled
From dawn to store the ripened grapes, or till
The roots around, and on the shadowing hill
Reclines and gazes down the vale. As he,
Whose mockers felt the she-bears' teeth, beheld
The chariot-horses rise erect to reach
The heavens of air, with searching eyes could see
At last, a little climbing flame afar,
That faded, cloudlike, as the fiery car
Ascended past his mortal sight, so here
Along the gutter of the fosse there came,
And passed, and left us, many a roving flame,
That seemed flame only, yet a human soul
Held each, but hid from sight the thief it stole.

This marvel of the moving flames to see,
I stretched from off the bridge so eagerly
I slipped, and falling grasped a rocky spar,
Alone that saved me from that depth. My guide
The answer to my eager search supplied.
"Within those moving flames the tortured are.
Each in his garment wraps himself from sight."

"Master, a truth already guessed aright
Thy word makes surer. Much I long to know
What spirit swathed in that wide fire doth go,
That flickers upward in two flames, as though
It rose combined from that reluctant pyre
Where, with his brother, burnt Eteocles,
To form two pillars of divided fire,
Because no death could quench their enmities?"

He answered, "Twain are in that flame; they run
Together now because they sinned as one.
Ulysses tortured there, and Diomed,
Repent the treason of the horse, that led
To Rome's foundation—through the fated door
The exiles issuing; and the trick lament
Through which still weeps in death Deidamia
For her lost Achilles; and furthermore
They suffer for the thieved Palladium."

"Master," I answered, "if they be not dumb
With so much anguish, let them speak, I pray,

—A thousand prayers I pray thee!—Grant we stay
Till that horned flame come hither! You see me
bend
Almost to falling with desire."
He said:
"Thy prayer is praise to him that prays it. Yea;
I grant; but hearken. When they pass below
Keep silent. Thee they might disdain, but I
Will ask thy purpose."
When they came more nigh,
He hailed them. "Ye who from one fire ascend
A twofold flame, I charge ye, if ye owe
A quittance to me for the lofty lay
Wherein I praised your earthly fames, I pray
That here ye pause, the while that one shall say
Of where at last he wandered forth to die."
At this was shaking of the greater horn,
And murmurs not at first articulate,—
A flame that by the wind is trailed and torn
To flickers,—till the end made animate
Wagged like a tongue, and answered,—
"When I turned
Aside from Circe's later lure, and left
The mount that Æneas named, my heart forgot
My aged father, I regarded not
My fondness for my child, my wife bereft
Of her due rights of love, but through my heart
Again the unconquerable ardour burned

To search experience of the world, anew
The vice and valour of mankind to view,
And seek the events of lonely lands apart
From known adventures of my race. I chose
One ship, and with a little band of those
With heart to follow, steered for open sea,
And left behind the morning.

Either shore,
Spain and Morocco saw we, and between
Sardinia and the isles. At length was seen
That narrow passage of the meeting seas,
Whereat the warning stands of Hercules
That no man dare to pass it. Old were we,
Myself and my companions, old and slow,
When Ceuta lay behind us, and Seville
Was fading on the right, and westward still
We pointed.

"Brothers," to the rest I said,
"O brothers, following where my star hath led,
That not a thousand shapes of pain could dread
From this so great adventure. Hear me now.
Deny not that we add to all our gains,
While the brief vigil hour of life remains,
Experience of the unpeopled world that lies
Behind the lights of sunset. Think ye now,
We are not fashioned as the brute that dies,
But born for virtue and exploit."

Thereat

Such ardour waked that had I sought to stay
I scarce had ruled them. Still the moving poop
Looked back, and left the dawn. A southward loop
We sailed, still bending to the left, the while
We laboured weakly at the oars, and mile
To foolish mile extended, till we moved
Beneath strange stars in unacquainted skies.
Five times the bright bowl of the moon had filled,
Five times through heaven its silver light had spilled,
When as we toiled that silent waste of way,
A mountain, drear and vast, in distance lay.
A mountain of such height and magnitude
As all my wandering life I had not viewed:
But short was our rejoicing. From the land
A tempest smote us. Thrice the beaten prow
Whirled round with all its waters: either hand
The rising waves assailed our decks, and now
The bows tossed upwards, now the poop, for He
At last had spoken. Overwhelmed were we;
And closed again the solitary sea."

CANTO XXVII

THE flame was silent, and erect and still
Moved from us with my leader's leave.
There came
Behind another and more restless flame
That strove for speech, and found its thwarted will
Gave only noise of whistling sounds, until
The words worked upward through the fire, as erst
The tyrant heard the brass Sicilian bull,—
That justly for its roasting victim first
He filled with its designer,—turn his cries
To bull-like bellowing. So the cunning file
Had tuned its throat.
But now the call he tries,
Vibrating upward to the tongue's intent,
Sounds clearer. "Thou—O dear and wonderful!—
Who bringest that loved speech of Lombardy,
Thou whose familiar words to him that went,
'Go now, I urge no further,' called me on,
Though late, to plead thy patience. Pause, I pray,
Some longer space. Although so wrapt, to me
It irks not if I hear thee. This blind way

We burn, but may not lighten, if ye fell
But lately from the Latian land, from where
The endless burden of my guilt I bear,
If peace is on Romagna, wilt thou tell?
For I was native of the mountains there
Between Urbino and the heights from whence
The Tiber rises."
Still I downward bent,
And leant far outward in my eagerness,
Whereat my Leader, from my fixed intent
To call me, touched me on the side, and said,
"Speak thou,—is here no Greek's impertinence
To scorn thee."
I thereat, who willed no less,
Spake swiftly, "O sad spirit, so garmented
In flame no glance can reach thee, still thy land
Hath tyrants, in their hearts devising war,
But nought of open strife I lately saw,
And still within its ancient walls doth stand
The strength of thy Ravenna. Still doth brood
Polenta's eagle, and his pinions spread
Above its roofs, and Cervia's. Forli now,
Its siege and slaughter of its foes forgot,
The Green Claws hold anew. Verrucchio
Hath still its mastiff, and his young, who show
The teeth that tore Montagna. Still doth plot
The little lion in his lair of snow
To friend both factions, and his rule admit

Lamone's and Santerno's towns. That one
Constricted in its narrow space that lies
Between the mountains and the Savio,
So between tyrant rule and freedom won
Alternates. As I answer all, for it
Requite me. Tell me, as I half surmise,
Who wast thou? Tell me all thy tale, that so
Thy name on earth shall stablish."
Then the flame
Roared without speech awhile, but in the end
The flickering point gave utterance. "If ye came
To count our tortures, and to earth ascend
To tell them, nothing would ye hear from me,
For all your pleading. But I know too well
There is no issue from this depth of Hell
For those who enter. With no fear of shame
I tell thee. By the sword I lived. Amend
To Heaven I schemed, and took St. Francis' cord
Not vainly, and my hope had fruited well,
But evil take the false Pope Boniface!
Who led me to my earlier sins. The sword
I lived by, but my deeds from infancy
The fox's wiles and shifts and secret shame
Had practised, till my cunning crafts became
A byword through the earth for perfidy.
When to the age I came at which mankind
Should turn the haven of the soul to find
From voyaging on life's alluring sea,

Drop sails and wind their idle ropes, and so
Pass inward on the tide with steerage slow,
Then was I grieved for all my boast before,
And with repentance wept,—alas, the woe!
It might have saved me.
Through this cord I wore
I served the Chief Priest of the Pharisees,
Who warred,—but not with Jews, and not with those
Who conquered Acre. Nor his Christian foes
Were merchants in the Soldan's land who dwelt,
But in the precincts of the Lateran
Christ's priest the Christian who beside him dwelt
Distressed with violence. Not his vows, nor dread
Of his high office as the Church's Head,
Nor reverence for my cord, that used to make
The wearers leaner, stayed him. Constantine
So called Silvestro from Soracte's cave
To cure him leprous, as this godless man
Besought my counsel. As a fool may rave
In drunken pride I thought him. Word of mine
He got not to inspire his guilt. At last
He urged me, 'Doubt not that thy choice be cast
With wisdom, if thou do the thing I bid.
I do absolve and bless thee even now
Before the words have passed thy lips. Do thou
Contrive that I shall gain Penestrino.
Forget not I can open or forbid
The Eternal Gate. The Keys that Celestine

So lightly loosed are twain. The powers are mine
Alike of Heaven and Hell.'
He urged me thus
Till speech than silence seemed less dangerous,
Whereon I answered, 'Father, since my guilt
Thou cleanest ere I tell thee. If thou wilt,
In one way canst thou triumph—all they will
In solemn treaty seal,—and nought fulfil.'

"I died, and to St. Francis' care consigned
My parting spirit, but there came behind
A shape that seized me by the hair, and cried
Against my Patron, 'Make no claim for him.
'Tis he who gave the counsel fraudulent.
I have not left him since. Can man repent
The while he sins? The contradiction here
Defies thy rescue, and the guilt is clear.'

"I turned, and one of Hell's Black Cherubim
Leered back. 'Thou didst not think with all thy craft
I studied logic in the schools?' he laughed.
He bore me down to Minos' seat, and he
Eight times his tail around his fearful back
Entwined, and gnawed it in his rage, and said
'Is here a sinner for the depths,' and me
He bade them fling to where I should not lack
My like, 'Down-cast him to the thievish fire

That hides its victims in its fold,' and so
For ever in this robe of pain I go;
My craft, that to my safe repentance led,
—That craft betrayed me to a fate so dire."

We left him wailing, and the writhing flame
Tossed its sharp horn for further speech, but we
No longer paused, but upward climbed, and came
To that next arch which spans a baser woe.
For suffering here were those who wrought to sow
Dissension—guilt the fruit, and here the fee.

CANTO XXVIII

WHO in free words, without restraint or bar
Of formal beauty in their choice, could say
The things I saw? Repeat a different way
A hundred times, and what those tortures are
It tells not. Words are lacked. The mind of man
Such horror hates. It shrinks to comprehend
Such slaughterous sights as here around us ran.

If all who in Apulia's fatal land
Bewailed the bloodshed of their violent end
Beneath the merciless Roman sword,—if they
Who died in that long Punic war, which gave
Even of the rings they wore so vast a prey,—
If those who felt the weight of Guiscard's glaive,—
With those who perished in the fatal band
The false Apulians to their fate betrayed,
Whose bones at Ceperano heap,—with all
Alardo's craft at Tagliacozzo made
Without resort of weaponed strife to fall,—
Were gathered in one place and each displayed
The shredded limbs, the ghastly wounds of war,

Nought were it to the dreadful mode I saw
In this ninth chasm.
A man beneath us stood
Whose body like a cantless cask was split.
The staves bulge outward. Through the bursting
wood
It pours its contents. So the open slit
That cleft him, fore and hind, from neck to thigh,
Poured out; between his legs his entrails hung.
He thrust his hands his heart and lungs among,
And cried against us, "See Mahomet's pride!
Or see where Ali weeping walks beside,
Cleft down the face in twain from hair to chin.
Scandal or schism has each man sown as I.
For discord are we sliced who walk herein.
A devil waits us in our turn. For while
We stumble in our wounds, with every mile
The torment heals us, till again we reach
The place we were, and with his sword to each
He gives the slitting which we felt before.—
But who are ye who with no falling gore
So calmly view us? Do ye seek delay
To shun the purpose of the guilty way?"
My Master answered, "Death he hath not known,
Nor guilt unpurged the downward path hath shown
To whom I lead, but full experience
To gain, he goeth through evil's last defence
From cycle down to cycle: this is true

As here I stand and speak, who like to you
Have all my deeds behind me."
At this word
Such wonder stirred the trench, that those who heard
A moment of their torment lost, and stayed
Oblivious of their gaping wounds. I made
The count of twice a hundred.
"Thou canst tell
Dolcino, if his waiting place in hell
He hath no haste for, that the Novarese
May win by starving whom they may not seize
By any sword-craft. Let him arm him well
With store of victuals ere the snow make blind
The mountain ways."
So spake Mahomet, the while
He stood with one leg lifted, to beguile
The demon that he moved.
A shade behind,
Noseless, with one ear only, and his throat
Slit open, through the red gash spake, "O thou!
Guiltless, who on the Latian ground ere now
Hast met me, save resemblance lead astray,
Remember Piero, if the backward way,
To reach the sunlight of the world, thy fate
Permit thee, if thy living feet regain
Mine own dear country where the gentle plain
Slopes downward to Vercelli, wilt thou tell

The noblest two in Fano's walls that dwell,
Cassero and Cagnano, that except
Our foresight fail us here, that lord adept
At violence and unfaith shall both betray,
Cast from their barque in Cattolica bay,
Sack-sewn and weighted? He that hath one eye,
And holds that land that one who here doth lie
Had better never in his life have seen,
Will bring them there to treaty, and thereby
So act that caution of Fecara's squalls
Will aid them nought. Such deed there hath not been
In Neptune's sight: he hath more hope who falls
To Argives or to pirates."
I replied,
"Your speech resists me. Show me first aright
Who with thee here laments that bitter sight,
That I may bear thy tale aloft."
He gripped
A comrade by the jaw. "This shade dumb-lipped
Was Curio once, with wagging tongue that lied
To cease the doubt in Cæsar. 'All delay
To men prepared is harmful!' urged he then.
Now walks he round to reach the place again
Where waits the slaughtering demon."
Sick dismay
Was on the face that once so glibly spake,
And tongue slit backward to the throat I saw

That once had gibed the dreadful cast of war.
Now moved he on, his endless turn to take
Prepared for that which did not grant delay.
But one whose either hand was sliced away,
Raised in the dusk the bleeding stumps until
The blood fell backward on his face, and cried
"Forget not Mosca! 'Ere ye counsel, kill;
Death's logic brief will save long argument.
The wrought deed prospers!'—So I urged. Ah me!
It bore a bitter seed for Tuscany."

I answered curtly, "And your race has died."
Whereat as one distraught with pain he went
Lamenting doubly.
Still I watched beside
The moving troops, and here a thing I saw
Divorced from reason. All our natural law
Denies it. Only mine integrity
To write such proofless words gives confidence.
But this I saw, and still in mind I see,—
A headless trunk that walked. Beside his knee
He swung his own head by the hair, as though
He bore a lantern for his feet to go
Unstumbling in the darkness. No pretence
Of explanation mine. What God ordains
The wise man marvels, and the fool explains.
The sharp eyes marked us, and a startled O!
Broke from the lips, and when the trunk below

Came level where we paused, the arm on high
Lifted the head to bring its words more nigh.

"Thou living, who dost view the grievous dead,
Is any doom so great as mine," it said,
"In all Hell's circles? That De Born am I
Who gave my prince the evil counselling
Which caused him, rebel to the elder king,
Against his sire to war. Ahithophel
So worked with David and with Absalom.
Because I parted father and child, in Hell
My root of being finds the brain therefrom
Disparted. So the Eternal Justice wills."

CANTO XXIX

THE numerous people, and the diverse ills
That slit them in a hundred forms, had made
Mine eyes so salted, that awhile I stayed
Content with weeping, till my wiser guide
Reproached me. "Wherefore is thy sight delayed
Amidst the dismal demon-hacked so long?
Thou didst not linger at superior wrong
In higher pits so fainly. Wouldst thou guess
The numbers whom discordant wounds distress,
Consider two and twenty miles complete
The narrowing circuit that we cross. But now
The moon has passed beneath us. Short allow
Remains, before the time conceded ends,
And far beyond this gloom the realm extends
That waits thee."

"Master," I replied, "if thou
Hadst heeded that which drew my gaze, thy feet
Had stayed beside me." But he pressed ahead
The while I answered, that the words I said
Were called behind him as we moved.

"Within

That cavern where I gazed so fixed, I saw
A kinsman who bewailed the dreadful law
That prices in such coin his earthly sin."

My Master answered, "Waste no thought thereon,
Mine eyes observed him whilst thine own were set
Too firmly on De Born to heed. He made
A gesture fierce with hate. They called him here
Geri del Bello."

"O my Guide! the debt
He left of honour, which his partners yet,
Who shared his shame, have venged not, so betrayed
His heart to indignation. More for that
My pity meets him."

While we spake, he led
Across the ridgeway to the final tier
Of ordered suffering. Far beneath us spread,
Hid only by the dimness, wide and flat,
The last sad cloister of the damned.

If sight
Came slowly in the gloom, it did not hide
The sounds of their lamenting. Every cry
Was like a shaft that pierced me, fledged for flight
With pity. Thousand were the woes that cried
In different accents, till my hands I pressed
Against my ears to still them.

If the ills

Of Valdichiana, when the autumn fills
Its lazars, with Maremma's sick should lie,
And all Sardinia's in one ditch, so high,
So foul, the putrid stench might reach.
We left
The last span of the bridge's long descent
To take the intersecting wall. We went
Left-hand, as always. As we climbed more low
The thick malignant air sufficed to show
How the infallible Justice of God contrives
The doom of those who use their earthly lives
To give the face of truth to falsity.

I think not that Ægina's ancient woe
More bitter evil in its course could show,
Though groaning in an air so pestilent
All creatures, even the fluttering insect, fell,
Till all of human kind, as sages tell,
Had perished, once again to multiply
From seeds of ants.
Along a trench we went
Where spirits in disordered heaps were thrown
And languished. This upon the belly lay,
That on the back, of him beneath. Alone
Another wriggled down the dismal way.

We went in silence, watching men too sick
To lift their bodies as we came, and heard

Their plaints unceasing. Two there were that leant
Against each other, as two pans are propt
For warming, on the hearth; and each so thick
Was scabbed, that horse-boy never yet so quick
Plied comb the while his master called, as they
Scraped with their nails the itching scales away,
That like the scales of bream around them dropt,
When the knife cleans it.
To the first his word
My guide addressed. "O thou whose nails so fast
Now shred thy mail, and now as pincers work,
If any Latians in this trench are cast
I pray thee tell, and may thy fingers last
Sufficient for thy needs eternally!"
The leper answered, "Latians both are we
Who weep this torment. Tell me whom I see
That so can walk untortured?"
He replied,
"One am I that High Heaven hath sent to guide
This other through the trenches ploughed in Hell."

At that they raised themselves apart, and turned
To gaze upon me. Others near, who learned
The meaning of my Master's words, alike
Their trembling bodies lifted up to see.

My leader's kindness gave the speech to me,—
"Ask that thou wilt," and by this leave I said,

"So that thy memory may not steal away
From our first world for many suns to be,
Let not disgust at thy sin's penalty
Restrain thee from the telling."
He replied,
"I was Arezzo-born, and burned alive
(Albero da Siena's false contrive
Condemned me); not for that for which I died
Ye see me here. There is no doubt I said,
Too lightly, man could raise himself in flight
By arts I knew, and in his foolishness
He willed that I should teach him. This I tried,
And failed, whereon the would-be Dædalus
Invoked his sire to burn me. None the less
This depth I found, by Minos judged aright,
Who errs not ever, and flung me downward thus
To this tenth blackness, for the alchemy
I practised."
"Surely," to my guide I said,
"There is no people of such vanity,
Not even the French, as are the Sienese."
Whereat the second of the leprous dead
Made answer, "Save the Stricca, who contrived
Such modest spending, or the youth who thrived
On his new cookery of the clove; or they
Who aided Caccia's haste to cast away
Forest and vineyard:—but that thou mayst know
Who thus gibes with thee at the Sienese,

Look closely, that mine altered face may show.
I am the shadow of Capocchio
Who made false metals by mine alchemies.
If whom I think thou art, thyself couldst tell
If false I coined, I coined that falsehood well."

CANTO XXX

WHEN Juno's hate, enwrathed for Semele,
Repeated evils on the Theban blood,
Athamas to such madness sank that he,
Who saw his wife approach, each burdened arm
Bearing a son, cried out, "The nets we spread.
We take the lioness and her cubs!" and so
With pitiless claws he dashed the elder dead,
Whereat she leapt, still burdened, to the flood,
And drowned that other, and herself. And when
The Trojans' heavenward pride was cast so low
That king and kingdom ceased, Hecuba then
Saw Polyxena slain, and on the sand
Lay Polydore, and all her misery
Her mournful captive mind refused, and she
Barked like a dog, to such forlorn degree
Had sorrow moved her. But the Theban land
Such furies held not, nor the Trojans met
Such naked hate, as here I saw. There ran
Two shades with rabid working jaws, that bit
As snaps a sow thrust outward from the sty,
The full trough waiting. One bent down, and set

Its teeth behind Capocchio's neck, and so
It dragged him, while his belly rubbed the grit.
Whereat the trembling Arentine began,
"That goblin is Gianni Schicchi. Thus
He mangles—"
"May that other's teeth forego
Thy neck-joint ever! Grudge thou not to show
Who is she, ere she passes hence."
He said,
"That female imp, the ancient shade is she
Of Myrrha, who with love flagitious
Approached her father in false garb, as he
Who gnaws Capocchio, aped Donati's dead,
The will by which the priceless mare he won
Dictating in that guise."
The furious two
Passed onward, mangling as they went, and I
The ill-born shadows more surveyed. Was one
Shaped like a lute, had but his groin begun
A forkless form. The heavy dropsy drew
His lips apart, as those whom fevers burn.

He said, "O ye, no penal fate who earn
Amidst this grimness, turn your eyes to see,
And hearken that which makes my misery
Beyond the eyes' observing. Justice sets
Before my sight the cool fresh rivulets
That Casentino's verdant hills provide

For Arno's fullness. Down the mountain side
They fall for ever in my sight, and so
Contain more torture than this swollen woe
That from my visage wears the flesh. The sight
That gives my frequent sighs a faster flight
Is justly of the place that saw my sin,
Mine own Romena, where the false alloy
I mixed and printed with the Baptist's head,
For which they burnt me. When on earth, I had
All earth's delights my fraudful wealth could
buy.
A drop of water now would make me glad;
But had I Branda's fount, to lave therein,
It would not yield me such exceeding joy
As would the sight of Alessandro dead,
Or Guido in such misery here as I.
One, if the ravening shadows do not lie,
Is here already. Had I strength to move
One inch of journey in a hundred years,
I had been started on the road to prove
So fair a rumour, and behold his tears.
Yea, though eleven miles the circle bends,
And half a mile its crowded breadth extends—
For by their tempting in this sink I lie."

I asked him, "Next thy swollen boundary,
Right-hand, how name ye those unmoving two
That steam like hands in winter bathed?"

He said,
"When first I tumbled in this pot to stew,
So lay they both. They have not raised a head.
I think they will not through eternity.
The nearer is the wife of Potiphar.
The other Sinon, that false Greek of Troy.
From burning fever reek they thus."
Too far
His scorn betrayed him. In a fierce annoy
The Trojan smote him with a lifted arm,
The rigid belly like a beaten drum
Resounding.
"Though my heavy limbs subtract
The power of motion, for so foul an act
My arm yet serves me."—So the Brescian said,
And brought it down upon the fevered head.
"It served thee little from a larger harm,
Or wherefore in full manhood didst thou come
Amongst us from the stake? It served, no doubt,
The base alloy to mix, and stamp it out."

The dropsied answered, "That on earth I burnt
Is truth, but say how long thy tongue hath learnt
Such custom? Falsehood was thine earthly skill."

He answered, "If I lied, thy trade could still
Outpace me. Would'st thou chide a lonely lie?
A thousand times thy hand would falsify.

There is no demon here could match the sum
Of thine iniquities."
"Such magnitude
Had thy one falsehood, all the world has spewed
Its indignation on thy name: be that
The heaviest burden of thy guilt."
"Be thine
The thirst that cracks thee, and the putrid filth
By which thou art distended."
"Like a cat
Thy jaw spits fury, as in life; if mine
Be moisture-swollen thirst, no fairer tilth
Ye garner for your gain," the Brescian said.
"The burning fever and the aching head.
I think Narcissus' mirror would not shine
For long unlicked beneath thee."

While they jarred
I paused to hear them, till my Master said,
"A little longer, and thy fixed regard
Will end our friendship."

When his anger showed
So sharply, all with sudden shame I glowed,
And might not answer. On I walked as one
Who dreams and wishes that the dream were done,
So evil turns it while he dreams, and so
Desires and knows not his desire is true.

So walked I in my shame and did not know
My shame forgave me in his thought. I knew
His anger, only in my thought alive,
Until he told me, "Weaker shame than thine
A greater fault would cancel; therefore cease
A grief too weighty. When we next arrive
At any kindred scene, thy mind release
More quickly. Discord in such filth is nought.
The thought to hear it is a vulgar thought."

CANTO XXXI

SO healed he with the tongue that hurt before,
Like that charmed spear which could the wounds restore
That first it made; and neither spake we more
The while we climbed from out the final pit,
To reach a hollow where nor dark nor day
Was round us. Here a horn above me blew
So loud that thunder to the noise of it
Were weakness. Not so loud Orlando's horn
Called vainly from the rout that cast away
An empire's purpose. Up I looked, and knew
A range of towers confronted, and thereat
I questioned, "Master, say what town is that
So near us?"
"Through the veil of darkness drawn,
The distance mocks thee. Let us haste, that so
The truth be shown," he said, and then—"But no,"
And took me kindly by the hand,—"the worst
Will seem less dreadful, if I show thee first.
They are not towers in a circling wall,

But giants planted round the pit, that all
Show upwards from the navel." As the mist
Thins slowly, by the morning sunlight kissed,
Till hidden forms show vaguely, and reshape
Their gradual outlines as the vapour leaves
The obstructed air, the gloom, as near we drew,
Reformed my error with a closer view
More frightful. For the nether pit receives
Their legs and bellies, while the rest doth rise
Like Montereggione's towers, that crown
The wall's full circle. Upwards from the thighs
One monster faced me. Nature found escape
From such creation ere our time, and well
She chose her condemnation. Still Jove's frown
Against them thunders. If the monstrous whale
Its breed continue, or the elephant,
They do not vainly through their bulk rebel
Against the rule of nature. Wits are scant,
And weight is harmless. When they both unite
What is there in mankind that might prevail
To make defence against them?
Like the pine
That stands before St. Peter's, such the sight
His visage showed me. All the rest alike
Was monstrous. Aproned by the bank, he yet
Such stature showed, that three tall Frisians
One on the other, could not thus combine

To reach his hair. The savage mouth began,
Rafel mai amech zabi almi,
To shout in rage toward us. Speech of man
It might not nearer. In full scorn my guide
The meaning of that barren noise supplied,
"His own his accusation. Nimrod he,
Who brought confusion on the tongues we speak;
In vain for converse here your questions seek.
He comprehends our speech no more than we
The sounds he rumbles. Dullard! take thy horn.
On thine own breast it hangs, and yet thy mind
Confuses, that it may not always find
And vent its passion with such blasts."
We went
Left-hand, and pacing thence a cross-bow shot,
A fiercer and more monstrous monument
Appalled me. Who the artist, once who got
Those cords around him, daunts my mind, but so
It had been. His right arm behind his back,
Five times were girt the parts exposed.
"Attack,"
My Master told, "against high Jove he planned,
What time the giants with the gods at war
Affrighted Heaven. Hence the equal law
That binds the arms he lifted. This ye see
Is Ephialtes."
"Master, might there be
Among these shapes the bulk of Briareus?"

"Yea, but far off he stands, and bound is he
Alike to this one, though of face more grim.
But Antæus, who did not war with Zeus,
Is near, and as there are no bonds on him,
He shall convey us down the sink of guilt."

No earthquake sways a massive tower as then
The bulk of Ephialtes, straining, shook
To break that bondage. Dread, that made me look,
So worked that fear alone my life had spilt,
Had not the strong bands cheered me.
On we went
And Antæus reached, five ells of height who showed
Above the edge whereon we walked, although
One half was in the dreadful cave below
To which we journeyed.
"Thou, who once abode,"
My guide addressed him, "in that vale of fate
From which the broken Carthaginians fled,
To Scipio's glory; thou, whose hands have caught
A thousand lions for thine ancient prey;
Thou, whose strong aid, it seems, had likely brought
The strife Titanic to a different day
From that which closed it,—set us down, I pray,
Upon the frozen floor, and be not shy
To help us. Surely, should we further go
For aid to Typhon or to Tizeo,
The hope of larger fame thy name shall miss,

For this man's life resumes on earth, and he
Can lift thy boast anew. I know for this
All creatures long in Hell."
My Master's plea
So wrought, that hasteful were the monster's hands
To lift us. In the grasp that Hercules
Once felt to fearing was he raised, and I
Caught to him, in one bundle held. As seems
The Carisenda to a man that stands
Beneath the leaning side, when overhead
A low cloud darkens, till its bulk he deems
To overweight it, so the Titan showed
To me beneath. By some alternate road
My choice had lain, but ere my doubt was said
He placed us gently on the dreadful bed
Where Judas is devoured with Lucifer,
And having loosed us on the icy plain,
Like a ship's mast he raised himself again.

CANTO XXXII

IF words were mine unlike our mortal tongue
In which the beauty of all heights is sung,
I might attempt with greater confidence
The core of my conception here. But whence
Are words for things undreamed? What words are fit
In harsh discordance for the utmost pit?
I have no words, and fear to speak, but yet
It must be.
Muses, by whose art was set
The Theban cincture of strong walls, lead on!
Grant me thy power, as once to Amphion,
That speech for truth interpret.
Here converge
The rocky causeways. In this pit submerge
The vomits of creation. All its weight
Is pressed upon them. Here the miscreate
Lament their own existing. Oh, what curse
Here in the bottom of the Universe
Had lifted, had they been but goats! To me
It seems for men too dreadful.

Down the slope
We started from the Titan's feet, and while
I still gazed backward at the wall, I heard
A cry beneath me, "Heed ye where ye tread
Lest fall thy weight on some grief-weary head
That here lamenteth."
Then I looked, and lo!
No ground I trod, but all the space below
Was glass transparent. Not the underflow
Of Austrian Danube from the weight of snow
Such roof divides. Not Don, alone that lies
Beneath the silence of the frozen skies,
Such mantle wears. Sclavonia's lonely height
Had fallen here, or Lucca's mountain white,
And had not cracked it.
As the frogs at night
Sit croaking, with their heads above the stream,
While on the bank the gleaner rests, adream
Of fields she emptied, so the miscreants lay
Frozen in firm ice, so deeply sunk that they
Showed livid through the hard transparency
That bound them, with their heads alone left free,
And chattering jaws that rapped the ice, and made
A noise of storks conversing. More betrayed
Their ceaseless tears the bitter woes they knew,—
Salt tears that froze in falling.
Here were two
So closely brothered in that frozen bed

That face to face the hair of either head
Was mingled, and their hidden features pressed
Each other.
"Tell me, ye that breast to breast
So consort," asked I, "who on earth ye be?"
Whereat they bent their backward necks to see
Who called, and as their faces rose apart
The tears that ever from their eyes would start
The fierce cold hardened at their source, and held
Their eyelids firm as any smith should weld,
Or wood to wood with iron is clamped. Whereat,
Like he-goats angered, both their heads began
To butt the other in their rage. With that
Another near, who did not lift his face,
Whose ears the frost had taken, gave reply,
"Why seek ye, gazing at our woeful case,
To read us? If for aught ye list to know
Those twain, the vale of the Bisenzio
Was theirs, from Count Alberto. From one womb
They came, and search ye all the dreadful doom
Of this Caina where ye stand, not one
Is here more worthy of the frozen pie
In which they serve us. Not that wretch fordone
By Arthur's hand, who pierced him, front and back
And shadow at once; nor he that next doth lie
Beyond me, Mascheroni,—if ye come
From Tuscan hills, my words ye will not lack
To place him;—nor Focaccia. Lest ye try

To vex me with more words, de Pazzi I;
I wait Carlino here, to justify
My lighter guilt."
Of doggish faces, numb
With frozen torture, round our feet there lay
A thousand. Still my shuddering thought recalls,
And shivers ever as the frozen ford
I strive to think not. Was it destiny,
Or chance, or will? My doubt I own, but while
We trod mid-distance of the final mile,
My foot caught sharply one projecting head.
Whereat it raised a weeping voice, and said,
"Why dost thou trample thus the doomed, unless
Thou come designed to deal more bitterness
In hate for Montaperto?"
"Master, stay
One moment here, and any more delay
I will not ask."
My Master paused, and I
To that reviling spirit gave reply,
For still it cursed me,—"Tell me who thou art,
Who thus reproachest?"
"Nay, but be thy part
To tell me first. Who art thou stumbling thus
Through Antenora, on the cheeks of us
Who suffer? Wert thou yet in life, it were
Too much to pardon."
"Nay, I live; but say

The name thou hadst, and I will make thy day
A longer on the earth than else thy share
Of fame continue."
"Nay, ye little know
The words of flattery on this slope of woe.
We lust oblivion only. Get ye gone!
Nor vex me further."
By the after-scalp
I gripped him roughly. "Speak, or every hair
That grows upon thee, from the root I tear,
Before I leave thee on this icy alp."

He answered, "Though the final hair ye pick,
And though my face a thousand times ye kick,
I will not tell you."
In my hand his hair
Was twisted, and an ample tuft was flung
Loose on the ice, he barking out despair
And rage together, when the song he sung
Aroused his neighbour, "Bocca, what thy woe?
Canst thou not chatter with thy jaws as we,
And cease thy barking? What strange fiend supplies
An extra pain?"
I said, "Thy name I know,
And would no more. Accursed, traitorous!
Thy name a byword on the earth shall be;
For I will tell thy treasons."
"He who lies

So near, and talks so glibly, thou canst tell,
And not me only. Thou canst speak it thus,—
'Close-pinched with Bocca in the frozen hell
I saw Duera. There his chattering jaws
Bewail the Frenchman's silver bribe.' If more
They ask, who shiver in the icy claws,
Boccaria lies beyond, whose neck was slit
At Florence: and Soldanire thou canst say
Is not far distant; and Ganelone;
And Tribaldello fails not to deplore
The gates he opened in the night."
We stayed
To hear no further. In short space ahead
We saw two frozen in one hole. As bread
Is gnawed in hunger: as Menalippus
Was chewed by Tydeus: so the upmost head
Gripped with its teeth the neck beneath, and tore
Just where the nape and brain unite. I said,
"O thou, so hard whose bestial hatred gnaws
Thy mate in condemnation, if good cause
Thy rage explain, it were thy gain with us
To share it. Upward I return once more,
And surely as my speech remain, I then
Will give thee justice in the mouths of men."

CANTO XXXIII

THE sinner ceased his ghastly meal, and wiped
His jaws upon the victim's hair, and said,
"Thou willest that reluctant words recall
A grief so dire it wrings my heart, before
An utterance forms, but if my speech shall fall
A seed that fruiting backward from the dead
Shall make him whom I tear infamed the more
Among our people, then I gladly weep
To tell thee. How to this sad depth ye came,
Where no man erst has been, nor what thy name
I know, but that familiar speech of thine
I heard, and hailed thee friend and Florentine,
—For I was Ugolino. Him I keep
In this remembrance of an earthly woe,
The arch-priest Ubaldini. Now I tell
Of that which brought us to this depth of Hell,
And why high Justice thus permits that I
Feed here, and shall not starve, and shall not die,
Nor cease my feeding. All I need not say
Of mutual fraud, nor how he snared away
My life, a tale for other tongues, but this,

The cruel fate I found, they well may miss,
It was so secret. In that hole which now
Is called the Dungeon of the Starved I lay,
And watched the narrow slit by night and day,
Until nine moons across its space of sky
Had ended, when the evil dream I knew
That did the curtain of my fate untie.

"It seemed that on the Pisan hills was I,
A gaunt wolf with his weary whelps that ran,
And after came the hounds; and there a man
That cheered them on; the lord of all was he,
This Ubaldini, and before him rode
Gualandi, and Sismondi, and thereby
Lanfranchi; and the hounds, that closer drew,
Were swift and lean and eager. I could see
The wolf among his whelps, that was but I
And my young sons, grow weary, and the hounds
Were tearing at their flanks. I waked to find
The night yet darkened, but the moaning sounds
My sons were making in their sleep for bread
Had roused me. Cruel were the hearer's heart
Who would not weep for that their cries forebode.
If not for this, for what should tears have part?
It was the first day that we were not fed.
The hour recurred. With anxious eyes, and dumb
Of any speech we waited. Now they come
—The steps we know—we heard the echoing clang

That locked and sealed us from the world: we heard
The steps recede. I had not wept nor stirred.
I watched them weeping till the youngest said,
'Father, what ails thee? Wilt thou speak?' But I
Gazed and not moved, and could not find reply.
And all that day not any word I said,
And all that night, nor any tears I shed,
Till through the bars the morning light anew
Revealed our grief, and in my sons I knew
The aspect of myself, and anguish wrought
Within me, till I gnawed my hands. Whereat
They answered (impulsed by a single thought
That hunger urged me), 'Father, do not stay
Thine hand against us. Shouldst thou take away
The lives we owe thee, right it were, and less
To us the pain, that from the flesh we give
Thy life continue.'
Then I strove subdue
The anguish in me, lest I more distress
The sons beyond myself I loved. That day,
And all the next, in silent pain we lay
On earth too hard to take us. After that
Death came. For when the next sad dawn was dim
Fell Gaddo at my feet, and with one cry,
'O father, wilt thou aid us nought?' he died.
And two days more I watched, and after him,
One after one, beheld them fall and die.
Then, blind with famine, three days more I groped

Around them, till my grief no more denied
The pangs of fasting"—as these words he said,
With hateful eyes upon his murderer's head,
Again he seized it in strong teeth that bit
Hard on the bone. Ah, Pisa! since thy state
Thy neighbours leave, and all vituperate
Who know thee, shall not those two isles, that lie
So near, block Arno at its mouth, and throw
Its waters on thee till the depth of it
Hath drowned the last man in thy walls? For
though
Had Ugolino all thy towers betrayed,
It were not right for one man traitorous
His children in their youth to torture thus
To innocent death, thou Thebes of Italy!
And therefore shall their frustrate names remain
In minds of all men where my tale is made.
Uguccione and Bragata they,
Anselm and Gaddo.
On we went, to see
A varied torment. Here the frozen pain
That bowed those others, bends its victims back.
They may not weep. The fount of tears they lack.
For all the hollows of their eyes are filled
With hardened ice. The tears that first they spilled
Are crystal vizors to their sight.
To me,
Though cold had calloused all my face by now,

It seemed a wind was passing. To my guide
I questioned, "Master, is not vital heat
Extinguished here? Can utter cold allow
This downward air?"
He answered. "Soon we meet
Its cause, and sight shall tell thee."
Near us cried
A wretch that marked us of the frozen host,
"O souls so cruel that the latest post
Is here assigned ye, will ye break away
The blocks one moment from mine eyes, that stay
The waiting tears?"
We paused, and I replied.
"Then tell us who thou art, and whence thy doom,
And he should well deserve the frozen tomb
Who did not aid thee."
"Alberigo I,
The Jovial Friar, whom Manfred brought to die!
The evil fruit that in my orchard grew
Returns. The figs I gave: the dates I pick."

"Ha!" said I, "hast thou also left the quick
So soon?"
He said, "I know not. We that lie
In Ptolomæa, oft this depth descend
Before our bodies reach their natural end.
For those that like myself to death betray
Their friends, a waiting demon drags away,

Casts to this cistern of our kind, and then
His body takes, and in the ways of men
Controls it, till his time be spent. Behind
Is Brancha d'Oria. If his corse have died,
Who here finds winter, better chance have ye
Than I to tell, who earlier came, but he
Long years has suffered in this ice."
I said,
"I think thou liest. Brancha is not dead.
He lives on earth, and in our mortal way
His body eats and sleeps and warms to-day."

"Where boils the pitch, ere Michel Zanche came,
Within the Malebranche's ditch," said he,
"This man a demon in his place had left,
And one beside who shared his perfidy
Came likewise ere his time; but reach thy hand
To do the service that my speech can claim."
I heard, but different course my heart had planned
Since horror learnt his name. The ice uncleft
Still blinds him. Rudeness there was courtesy.

Ah, men corrupt from God! Ye Genoese,
Why do ye haste not on your path to these,
And earth seem cleaner? With Romagna's worst,
I found Ser Brancha, for his soul's disease
Ere death who suffers in this place accurst.

CANTO XXXIV

"THE lifted banners of the King of Hell,"
—My leader roused me from my thought—
"are nigh;
Look therefore." I beheld, as in such sky
As foul mist hides, or murk of night obscures,
A turning windmill loom; and such the gale
Its motions caused, that I, of strength too frail
To meet it longer, shrank behind my guide.

Beneath our feet—but memory fears to tell—
The sinners here contained in Hell's last sewers
Were frozen solid in firm ice, and shone
Like straw in glass; and as we walked thereon
We saw some flat, and some with heads below,
And some pulled backward like a bended bow,
And some were upright.
When we got so near
I needs must see, my leader stepped aside.
He said, "Let fortitude reject thy fear,
For Dis confronts thee."
There I think I died,

Though living. Not the icy blast I met
A living man could face, a dead could feel.
But here speech fails me. Reader, words are nought
To help me further. To thy livelier thought
I leave it.

Breast-deep in the ice was set
The Emperor of the dolorous realm; but yet
So huge he towered that I should seem more fit
With giants to consort, than a giant compare
With one arm only. He, that once so fair
Could walk assured in Heaven, the lordliest there
Beneath his Maker, fills this glacial pit.
If by his woe we price his earlier weal,
Or judge his glory by his aspect now,
Well may he fount affliction. For one head
I saw three faces. One was fiery red.
The others slanting from each shoulder rose
To form one crest that shapes creation's woes.
One pallid yellow, one the sable hue
Of those who wander from the tropic land
Wherefrom the sources of the Nile expand.
There were two wings the three foul heads below
Such bird to suit. I never saw such spread
Of ocean canvas to the wind: but these
Were bat-like, plumeless, and the wind they bred,
—They flapped unceasing—caused the glacier freeze
Down which we traversed. With six eyes he wept,
The while a sinner in each mouth he kept,

And chewed, and loosed not. Tears and foam unite
With dribbling blood, that spurts from every bite
Down his three chins. The midmost was not bit
So much as torn. At times his back was flayed
All bare of skin.

"That soul that most endures,
Whose head Apollyon in his mouth hath got,
Whose legs kick outward, is Iscariot:"
My Master told, "of those whose heads may quit
The teeth that chew them, down the swarthier chin
Is Brutus dangling. Mark how silently
He writhes. The comrade of his doom is he
Who shared that treason, Cassius.—But the night
Is rising in the world without, and we
Must hasten. All is seen that lies herein,
And hence depart we."

At his word I put
My arm around him. He with lifted foot
His opening watched, and when the wings were wide
Leapt from the glacier to the tangled side,
And midst the shaggy tufts of frozen hair
The scaly hide descended.

When we came
To pass the swelling of the haunch, my guide
With arduous effort turned, till where his head
Had been before, he placed his feet instead,
And gripped the hair as one that mounts. I thought
That backwards into Hell his path he sought.

But he, hard-panting with that toil, replied,
"Hold fast—be silent—by this only stair
We find Hell's exit."
Thus he climbed to where
An opening gashed the rock, and reaching there
He placed me on the ledge, and warily
Himself stepped after. Here I looked to see
Again the front of Lucifer, and lo!
His legs stuck upward.
Were a man too dense
To understand the point we passed, he still
Might judge the toil before me, to return
To earth's far surface. "Gain thy feet, for ill
The pathway climbs," my guide enjoined, "that hence
Shall take us, as thy weary steps must learn,
And in the outer skies the sun midway
To noon is lifted."
Round I looked, and saw
No palace, but such cleft in earth's deep maw
As likest to a natural dungeon showed,
Ill-floored, ill-lighted.
"Ere this evil road,"
I answered, rising, "leave the deep abyss,
I pray thee tell me, lest my thought should err,
Why upward rise the legs of Lucifer,
And where the icy plain we crossed? and how
The morning shines without, which was but now

To night descending?"

"Dost thou spare to think
Its meaning? Downward through the central sink
We passed. We have not backward climbed to where
I leapt, but holding by the frozen hair
We scaled this maggot of the evil core
To which all weights conclude; and when, midway,
We turned with effort, then beneath us lay
That half the world from which we came, and we
Look upward to that other world of sea
Which those who sail beyond thine hemisphere
Have found, and left uncharted. Standing here
Beneath us is the great dry land that lies
Within the cover of the northern skies,
And centres round the Sacred Mount whereon
The Holiest died. Above us reaches far
The region where the pathless oceans are;
For this side fell from Heaven the Worm of Hell
And all the land drew backward where he fell,
And hid beneath the waters. There is morn
When nightfall closes on thy northern land;
And there our issue, for a stream has worn
A tortuous passage from the outer skies
To this foul pit where Beelzebub lies,
And through the darkness of the toilsome way
Its sound must lead us."

Nothing more we said,

Nor paused for rest, however jagged and rough
And dark the path we climbed, and long enough
For mortal feet to weary. Fast he led:
And I made tireless by that hope ahead
Pursued him upward, till the rocks were rent
With first a sight of Heaven's clear firmament,
And then the earth's clean airs with learnt delight
I breathed, and round me was the beauteous night,
And overhead the stars.

THE END

NOTES

Canto I. The opening scene is clearly allegorical, and is capable of various interpretations. The simplest, and most probable, is that the sleek and playful panther is Dante's own city of Florence, the lion is the king of France, threatening the invasion of Italy, and the she-wolf is the temporal power of the Roman See, the insatiable greed and corruption of which are represented as the radical causes of the condition of Italy.

The poet has realized that, if he would save his moral integrity, he must abandon political ambitions and associations, and revert his mind to the pursuit of literature, and to the idealities of earlier years.

Canto II. This requires little comment. It amplifies the idea of the poet's rescue from imminent spiritual peril by the interposition of Virgil and Beatrice. Virgil obviously represents the love and practice of poetry, as opposed to the snares of political ambition. Beatrice may be held to personate some spiritual quality by those who care for such abstractions. The meaning is clear to anyone of average imagination, and only loses by definition.

Canto III. The inscription over the gate of Hell requires careful reading and intelligent apprehension. The idea is absolutely different from that of eternal torture by an angry Deity. Hell is an inevitable condition of evil. Those who occupy it are self-divorced by their own natures from the light of Heaven. The great majority are not

strictly in Hell at all, but rotate in endless repetition of the futility of their wasted lives. They are typified by one who had been offered and refused the Papacy. An alternative choice had brought great dishonor to the Church, and, considering the consequences which may follow from a mere refusal of the responsibilities that life offers, Dante recognizes the justice of the condemnation. The parable of the talent which was wrapped in a napkin reaches the same conclusion.

I anticipate a detail of criticism when I agree that the birds of line 133 may have been falcons, not doves. But the spectacle of pigeons hesitating to come to the call of one who would feed them, and flying downward one at a time, must have been familiar to Dante in the squares of Florence, and it is in some ways a more forcible metaphor, and one which is more familiar to a modern reader. It may be objected that Dante would have compared the lost souls to falcons rather than to doves, but that is not certain, as the success of his metaphors is often gained by sharpness of contrast, underlying a superficial similitude.

Canto IV. This canto asserts the impotence of Hell against those whose lives were blameless. It presents no difficulty.

Canto V. Here we enter the first circle of the places of punishment. The idea is that Hell consists of nine narrowing circles (with some subdivisions), each smaller than the one above it, and each containing sinners of a deeper iniquity, till the center point is reached, where Satan is fixed, surrounded by those whose sins have merited "the place of Cain."

There are four outer circles, before the fiery citadel (the city of Dis) is entered, and these are occupied by those whose sins were only against their own bodies. They are not

subjected to the indignity of torture by demons, but by hostile elements only

The first circle contains those who sinned through lack of self-control, and they are now buffeted about by eternal winds, so that when they seek to control themselves they are unable to do so.

Canto VI. The next circle contains the gluttons, whose previous self-indulgence is now balanced by an appropriate discomfort.

Canto VII. In the third circle, the avaricious and the wasteful find the same doom in the futility of abortive toil. Dante cannot recognize any of the lost in this section: they have degraded themselves until their features have become indistinct and blurred from any human likeness.

This is the last of the outer circles, and the edge of the slough which divides it from the city of Dis is occupied by the muddied shades of those who were once sullen, and ungrateful for the light and air, which they received from the free bounty of God.

Canto VIII. As the adventurers are ferried over the half-liquid moat, they observe others of those who suffer from the unrestrained indulgence of evil temper, this being represented as the worst form of the various incontinences which these outer circles contain.

Here, at the gates of Dis, we first encounter the demons that people Hell. The sins of weakness are passed, and we meet evil in active assertion and rebellion against the Deity.

Canto IX. The stubborn, though useless, opposition of the demons to the entrance of Virgil and Dante shows that they are approaching the abodes of evil in more malignant and aggressive forms than have been encountered previously.

Canto X. Here are those whose fault is no more than that they lived in prideful contempt of the faith and disci-

pline of religion. They are innocent of the baser sins which will be ultimately encountered, but they are within the circle of burning because their sin was spiritual, not merely carnal, as were those of the previous sinners.

Canto XI. Here we approach to those who were not merely infidel through arrogance, but from baser impulses, and the stench of their wickedness is such that it cannot be quickly faced. Virgil uses the opportunity to explain the distinctions of human guilt that are recognized in the divisions of Hell. We have passed the sins of incontinence. We are entering the outer circles of Dis in which the sins of violence are punished. These are subject to subdivision in three circlets, as they are committed by men against their fellow men, their own bodies, or God.

In a farther depth we shall find those who have sinned, not by violence, but by fraud, and they will be subdivided in circular trenches, as their frauds were perpetrated against strangers, those with whom they were connected in some relation of confidence, or those to whom they had direct obligations of loyalty—so that all traitors are in the ultimate depth of Hell.

Canto XII. The adventurers now descend to view the punishment of those who have committed violence against their fellow men, the blind and brutal violence of the Minotaur typifying the minds of such criminals. The ruined wall shows (as is seen again in still lower circles) that Christ had penetrated to the core of Hell, and that those whom He released included sinners from the foulest circles.

Here the violent suffer appropriately in boiling blood, graduated according to their guilt.

Canto XIII. The penalty of those who have done violence to their own bodies is as logical as that which falls upon those who do violence to others.

Cantos XIV-XVI. Here, in a startling conjunction, are those whose violence is directed against God—the sodomites and the money-lenders. There is no question of condemning only those who charged an excessive rate of interest. Dante holds the deliberate opinion that the charging of interest for the use of money is morally indefensible, and a radical evil of our civilization. It is commonly said that he would have modified this view, could he have foreseen modern industrial developments. I can find no reason at all to take this view. On the contrary, I think he would regard them as having demonstrated the truth of the warning which he gave to the world.

Canto XVII. Notice the useless cunning with which the money-lenders attempt to cheat their doom by gathering on the extreme edge of their place of punishment—and so congregating upon the very edge of the final depth, where the fraudulent suffer.

Cantos XVIII-XXXI. The fraudulent are divided among ten circular trenches, each lower and smaller than the previous one, and these are bisected by bridges of rock that slope down to the central pit, on which they converge. It is therefore possible to go straight down to the center by one of these causeways, crossing the ten trenches in succession, or to turn aside as each trench is passed, and continue along the circular wall that divides it from the next one, turning inward again when the next of the converging bridges is reached. The ten trenches contain

(1) Panderers, and betrayers of women.
(2) Those who deceive by flattery.
(3) Those who enrich themselves under the cloak of religious service.
(4) Sorcerers, and all who make gain from the credulity of their fellows.

(5) Barterers, that is, those who corrupt justice, regarding public office as a means of extorting bribes, and using other illicit means for their own enrichment.
(6) Hypocrites, who make false professions of religion, and betray its precepts.
(7) Thieves and cheats.
(8) Tricksters, who deceive those in whom they had deliberately established confidence.
(9) Those who with cunning words promote strife or discord.
(10) Coiners, forgers, and their like.

Cantos XXXII-XXXIII. The final pit, through which the poet and his guide must pass to ascend by the opposite way to the Southern Hemisphere and the mountain of Purgatory, contains the sinners who have betrayed those to whom they were under an obligation of loyalty, this being the lowest possibility of human baseness. Dante may have meant to imply that Ugolino gnawed the dead bodies of his children before he died, but he is not clear, and I have repeated the ambiguity.

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